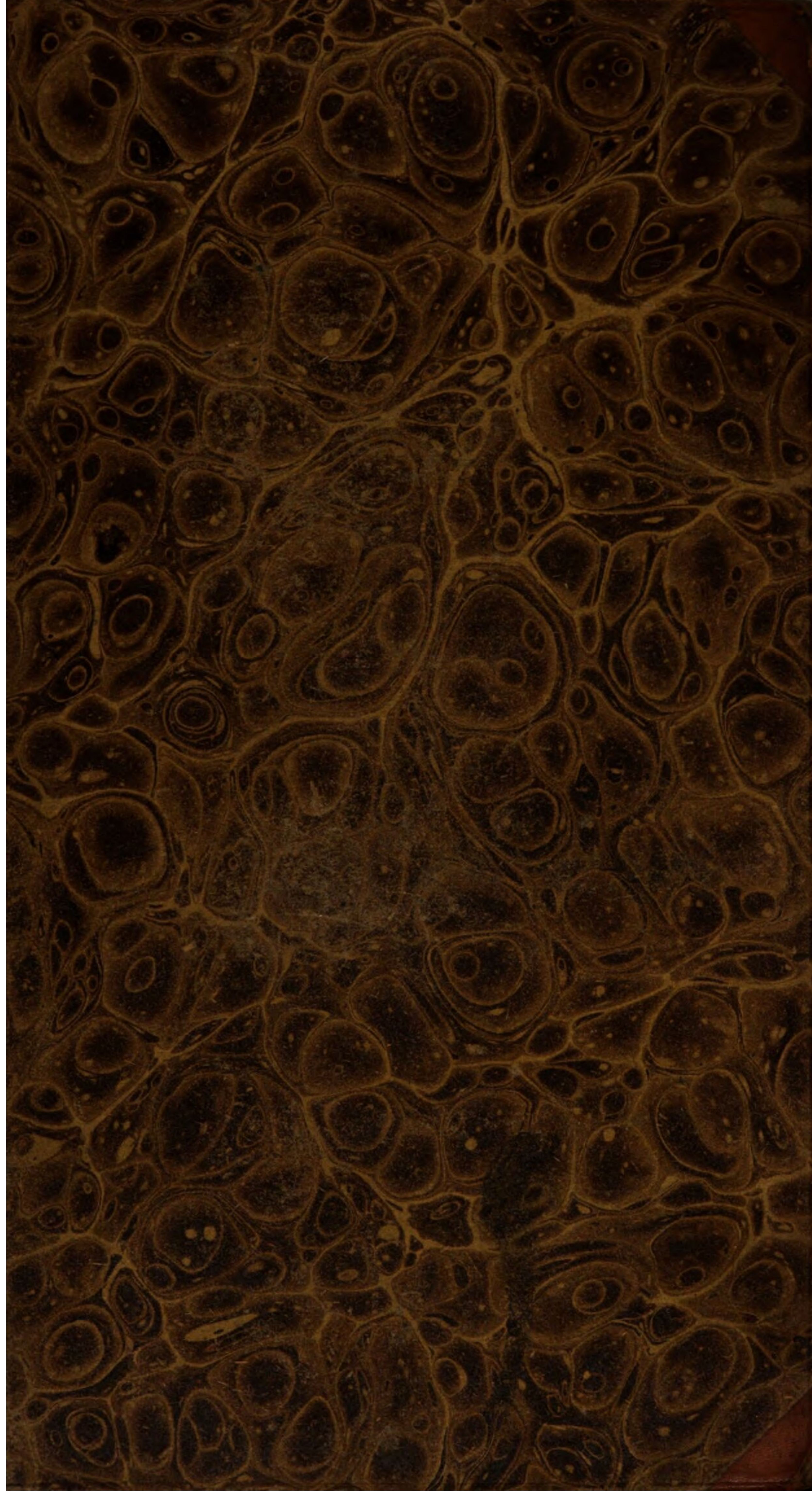
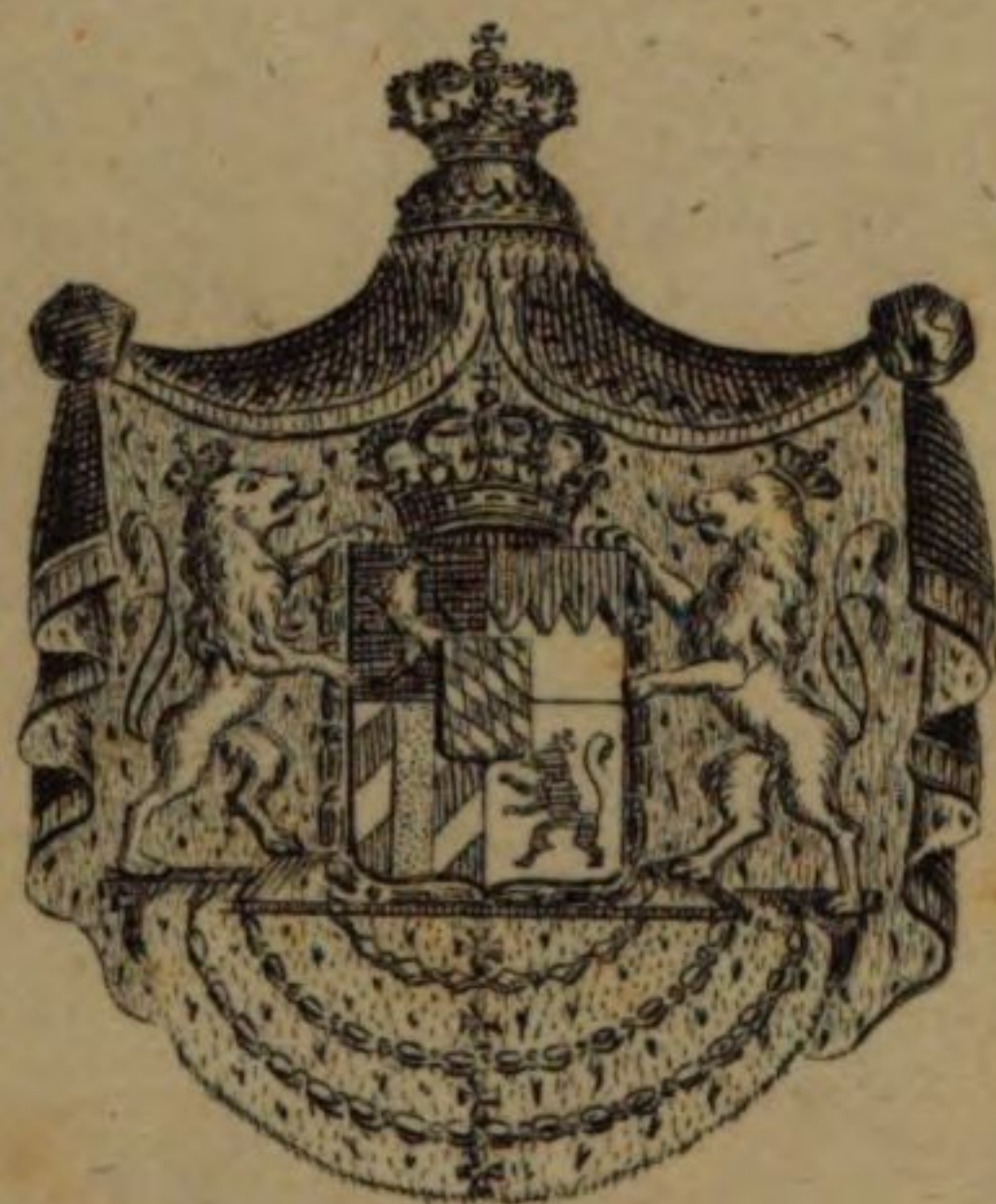
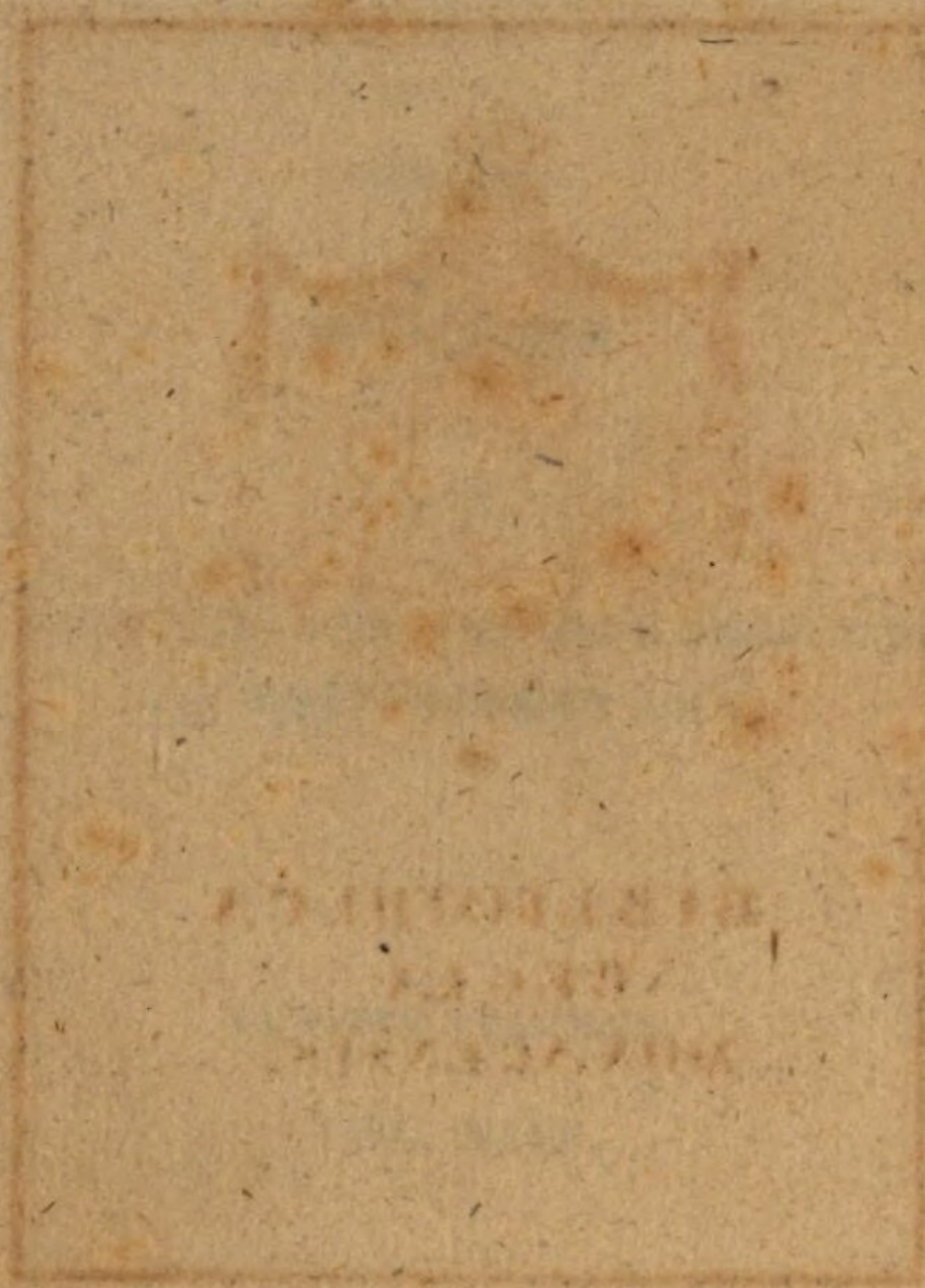




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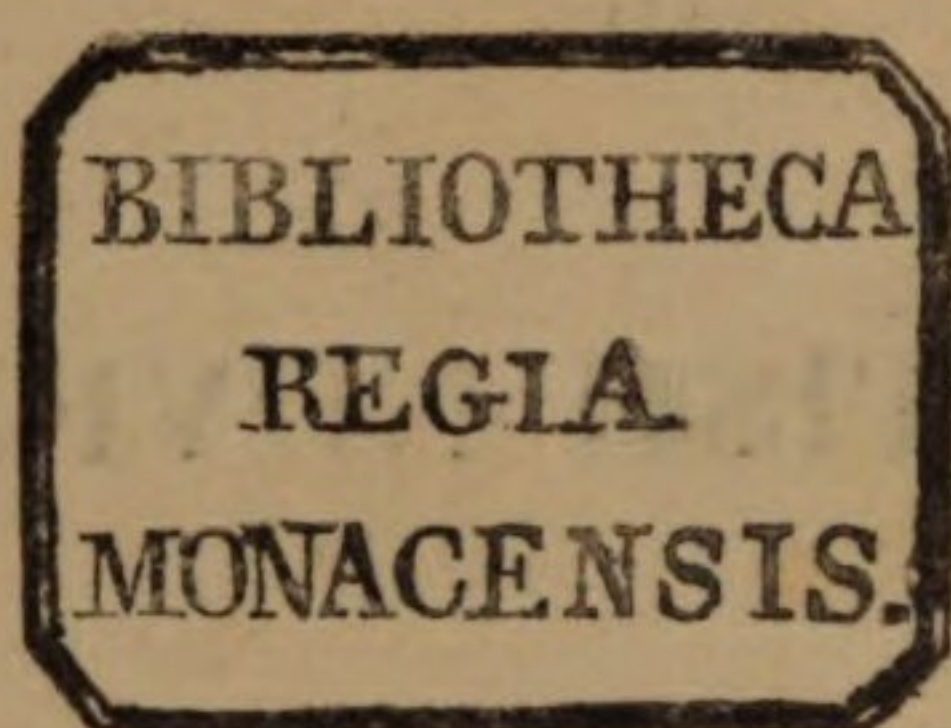
BY THE

**MOST POPULAR AND FASHIONABLE WRITERS
OF THE PRESENT DAY.**

IN FIFTY VOLUMES.

VOL. XLIV.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR COLBURN AND BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.



BIBLIOTHECA

REGIA

MONACENSIS.

SELF-GUIDANCE.

CHAPTER I.

THE breezes, which brought distress and weakness to Albert, invigorated and revived Stuart; but his convalescence was not without alloy to himself and Geraldine; for its farther increase would restore the one to her convent, the other to the camp, and render their present life only the bright spot in a gloomy existence never to be realized again—which was, but is passed. Still, to talk of separation, would be to forfeit all present enjoyment. Geraldine and Stuart,

therefore, lived as though the village of A—— was their home, and that within its narrow bounds all interest was centred. The soft air, the bright sun, and the calmness of all around, lent its aid to the delusion; and without Anderson's constant speculations on political events, the war and all its concerns would have faded from Stuart's mind, as he listened to her who had thrown a charm around his late existence, which it had never known before, and never could know again; for if Stuart ever again met Geraldine, it could not be under similar circumstances. Supposing that she did not, as seemed most probable, embrace the Catholic faith and veil, he might again hear her voice, see her smile, and gaze on her lovely form, but it would be in the world, surrounded by the invidious, or, at

best, indifferent, and they would meet as strangers.

A circumstance at length took place, which obliged Geraldine and Colonel Stuart to recall their wandering thoughts to sublunary affairs, more than all the eloquence of Anderson had been able to accomplish.

The three companions were in the habit of going frequently on the water. One evening, as they were pursuing an excursion which brought health to the one and amusement to the others, their conversation turned upon music; to exemplify some propositions started, Geraldine sang a beautiful air of Moore's. Such music was solely for the ears of Stuart and Anderson, their boatman was only intent on gaining the hire of his services, having outlived, or never possessed a soul for harmony; his presence,

therefore, was only as that of the boat itself, and no other living soul appeared to dispute Stuart's and the Surgeon's right in the soft voice which this evening seemed inspired with peculiar richness and feeling. At Stuart's request, she repeated the air, but he soon found their audience had increased; two strangers, apparently travellers, arrested their horses on the river bank, and were profoundly attentive.

Flattered by such a mark of Geraldine's attraction, Stuart desired the boatman to draw nearer the shore. He had hardly done so ere one of the strangers began to harmonize the song by singing a second part, with an understanding of the air and words, which could proceed from no other than a native of Britain.

"English, by all that is delightful!" said Anderson, clapping his hands with joy.

“English, by all that is abominable!” exclaimed Stuart, raising his in despair.

“What is it discomposes you?” inquired Geraldine, interrupting her song.

“Why, my folly in ordering the boat nearer the shore: that voice I should know amongst a thousand; it is that of Clairville, the last man I ever wish to meet — it is he indeed, and his companion—”

“Mr. Halliday,” said Anderson.

“Let us put from the shore,” exclaimed Geraldine.

“It is too late,” observed Anderson, who had no wish to let the strangers escape without farther parley. “Colonel Stuart, you have nothing left for it but to acknowledge your friends, who, I plainly see, are quite ready to greet you—there, one of them calls you by your name. Now, my good fellow,” to the boatman, “pull to the shore.”

The orders were promptly obeyed, and in an instant Stuart was actually near enough to shake hands with the gentlemen on shore.

The one, who was chief spokesman, and whom Stuart addressed as Halliday, was in an unstudied military undress, and appeared eminently handsome. He rode a beautiful horse, on which he sat with grace as well as ease—two qualities not always combined in an Englishman's seat on horseback, the last being as rarely absent as the first is frequently so. His voice, as he eagerly addressed Stuart, was manly, clear, and gentle, such as to give as favourable an impression as voice could do. His companion was extremely different: fair, languid, and effeminate in appearance, he seemed or affected to seem fatigued, and spoke little; but, from beneath his long dark

eye-lashes, a striking contrast to his pallid cheeks, he had stolen a furtive glance or two at Geraldine, from which slight survey he determined, if he gained admittance therein, not to hurry away from Stuart's quarters, however Halliday should be obliged to continue his route without him. He was a traveller by choice, and had no ostensible connexion with the army but as a visitor to his fellow-traveller, Mr. Halliday. Between these two a strong alliance existed; they were, however, in many points perfectly different in character, and the cause which could drag the luxurious Sir Francis Clairville into dangers and difficulties bore testimony to the warmth of his feelings for Mr. Halliday.

When the object of the strangers was explained, namely to pass a night with Colonel Stuart on their way to join the

army, he had nothing left but to receive in good part what was meant in kindness. He did not think it necessary to encourage much present parley, however, but pointing out the road which led to A——, he gave his friends the direction to his quarters, where he proposed joining them with all speed. Anderson, however, who had a decided passion for a new face, and to hear what is called news, could not abandon the guests so readily, and, springing on the bank, offered his services as their escort. Stuart signed to the boatman to push from the shore, which they had fairly quitted ere the languid Clairville had turned his horse the road he was to travel, or had changed the direction of his eyes, still bent on Geraldine's face.

No sooner were they out of hearing

than Stuart bitterly lamented the untoward addition to their party.

“My dear Geraldine, how will you manage?”

“The difficulty will not be great; I shall retire into my own apartment, and there remain during the stay your friends make.”

“And so deprive me of some of those precious hours, the final close to which draws so frightfully near. I cannot imagine what brought them here at all! Halliday has an excuse; he is my friend, is engaged to my sister, and has duties in this country; but what can induce that soft, effeminate Clairville, whose proper atmosphere is St. James’s Street, to wander into these parts? Whatever drawbacks our situation as soldiers may possess, I still thought, in opposition to many evils, we had some

gains, and that one of our advantages was the absence of such as he; but I find I am mistaken, and the army is to be the rendezvous of any fine gentleman, who, sick of luxury and refinement, requires change of scene to dissipate his *ennui*."

"I think they said they should only trespass on your hospitality for one night: poor Albert will be the gainer, as I shall devote this evening to him."

His guests' arrival had disconcerted Stuart, and Geraldine's intention of devoting hours in consequence to young Douglas, which should be his, created a jealous pang which he sharply felt, though he would have been sorry to confess openly. The landing-place from the river was directly under the terrace of the house they inhabited, which was gained by a flight of marble steps; at

the top of the steps it was very evident three individuals were stationed.

“They are there before us,” uttered Stuart with a heavy sigh, “and in the very spot I wished them to avoid, thanks to Anderson’s guidance. What is to be done? Geraldine, you tremble; can you have any affection for one who places you in such cruel situations? but if you can receive counsel from such, listen to my proposal. You must not avoid these men; any mystery will only increase their curiosity and your annoyance. You must be introduced to them, and with the conscious innocence you possess, you may meet their regards with composure and silence. The dignity of your manner will disperse all ideas which, from finding you here, may have arisen in their minds to your—prejudice.”

“I will do as you like,” answered Ge-

raldine, “but it is mockery to talk of conscious innocence to one who is a wanderer from her father’s house, leading a life which, though pure, is not exempt from suspicion; which suspicion your friends, without any great breach of charity, may well entertain, and which all the dignity of the most dignified queen would be unable to efface.”

“Geraldine, you make me miserable when you talk so,” and Stuart placed his hand within hers. It was feverish, and his pulse tremulous; the state of his health was not proof against any unexpected agitation. Geraldine felt this was the case, and the few minutes they remained longer together, were spent by her in eager entreaties, that he would soon seek that repose his agitated nerves required. Stuart smiled at her earnestness; and when they landed, it was his

countenance alone she watched, not that of the strangers ; theirs might be insulting, flattering, or indifferent ; she heeded nothing, but that Stuart was deadly pale : a remark Anderson was not backward in making also, and he insisted, with the authority of his situation, on Colonel Stuart taking immediate repose, attributing his fatigue to his protracted stay upon the water. Mr. Halliday and Sir Francis begged their friend not to regard their presence : the result was, that Anderson hurried Colonel Stuart to his chamber, Geraldine escaped to her's, and Mr. Saunders took upon himself the conducting the strangers to the apartments assigned them. To Geraldine, the escaping so well was matter of infinite delight, and she resolved, having once left the room, to return no more. The evening, however, wore away but sadly ; part of it was devoted

to Albert, but he was inclined to sleep, and as Geraldine sat by his side listening to his painful breathings, her thoughts were ever in the apartment below, where Stuart had joined his friends at dinner. She dreaded the excitement of their society, and then such guests must remind him of home, and people, and duties, which at A—— seemed only a vision to be obliterated and forgotten. Alas ! it was the life at A—— which was visionary, and to be obliterated ; perhaps Stuart, in the conversation of his friends, was already making the discovery, and sighing for home, grandeur, field sports, and political greatness ; all of which at A——, he held in contempt, or affected to despise, when held in the scale with one smile from Geraldine, and one hour of her society. The next morning brought

her the following note from Colonel Stuart.

“Let me beg of you to join us at breakfast; your absence, I assure you, would occasion more surprise than your presence; and indeed, I cannot endure that my self-invited company should drive you to your apartment, where, if the truth must be told, my thoughts were far more yesterday evening than at Newmarket, White’s, or Epsom, and I do not know where besides my friends’ conversation intended to transport me—a discourse which very little compensated for that they deprived me of, and which, if you will not give me this morning, I will follow this note to obtain in that apartment you guard from all intruders with so jealous an eye.”

To the breakfast-room accordingly, at the customary hour, Geraldine went.

Mr. Halliday alone occupied the apartment: he was standing at a window which commanded a prospect well worthy of his regards; but there was something in his countenance which betrayed perfect abstraction from all without. Geraldine concluded he was thinking of his lady love: the idea was confirmed by the slight notice her presence occasioned,—one distant bow, without word or action beyond the ceremony. Once he looked at her with a searching more than kind glance; but his eyes were quickly removed. All the information a look can give, thought Geraldine, will be transmitted to England, and read by the pure Georgiana's eyes, overflowing with tears at her brother's degradation and my artifices, and from her will the story travel to the high-minded, spotless Lady Lawnley: and who

is to undeceive them? Anderson at last entered to break the *tête-à-tête*.

“How is Stuart to-day?” said Halliday, emerging from his window, and addressing Anderson.

“Thanks to a composing draught, which I administered last night, much better. When you have been shot through the body,—which when you are, I hope it will be my good fortune to attend you,—you will find it is some time before you lose occasional mementos of such an event; even the most agreeable society may then be baneful.”

“Indeed !” and again Halliday raised his eyes to Geraldine’s face with an expression she could not mistake, and which made the eloquent blood rush to her cheeks in a painful degree.

Anderson did not observe the look,

and as he settled himself at the breakfast-table, continued,—

“I have a crow to peck with you, Mrs. Mortimer, for deserting us last night. If your sweet voice would have sung to us as usual, you would have spared our Colonel’s lungs, and, I may add, Sir Francis’s eyes, for they ever and anon cast most anxious looks towards the door, with evident chagrin that your fair form never appeared thereat. Your singing delighted him, and in order to have that pleasure renewed, he is going to give us the pleasure of his company for the next day or two. He was not backward in his inquiries and admiration, I can assure you, when that gentleman,” nodding to Mr. Halliday, “and our Colonel, talked over family affairs.”

“If Sir Francis gives us the pleasure of his company only for the satisfaction

my voice can procure him, he will be much disappointed, I fear: my knowledge of music is very limited, and my practice much neglected; and if he stays not for Colonel Stuart's society, or for repose after the fatigues of his journey, he had better not lose the present opportunity of joining the army."

"And so be rid of him altogether, eh?" said Anderson bluntly.

When Colonel Stuart made his appearance, he looked pale and languid. Mr. Halliday rose to meet him, and proffered his arm to assist him across the room with a gentle friendliness which would have done honour to the other sex. The kindness was not lost on Geraldine's tender feelings, and it was difficult for her to repress the tears from falling down her cheeks as she witnessed any attention to Colonel Stuart.

"I am afraid," said Mr. Halliday,

“we were too much for you last night, Stuart. Our friendship, which is no uncommon case, lacked discretion, accounting, perhaps, for that quality being somewhat in disrepute.”

“Friendship,” answered Stuart, “is not at all in disrepute with me, and I am too glad to pardon the effect for the cause. I hope others will be equally charitable,” and he turned a beseeching glance towards Geraldine; of the charity of whose feelings there could be no doubt. “You are not well,” continued Stuart agitatedly.

“Why, what is this?” exclaimed Anderson, looking in her face, and preventing any reply: “drink your coffee, my dear Mrs. Mortimer, and let us have a window open; the room is suffocating. Well, now you look better. I lay my life you have been visiting that poor lad this morning: I must not let you

keep such close attendance upon him, or I shall have you upon the sick list. I shall get our Colonel to interfere."

Stuart was silent, but anxious. Geraldine stammered out something about the heat of the room. A silence ensued, which was broken by Anderson inquiring what was become of Sir Francis Clairville, as he had not yet made his appearance.

"Clairville," answered Mr. Halliday, arousing himself to be communicative, "is profiting by his present quarters to obtain what I have never allowed him to enjoy since he left London, a thorough night's repose. At this moment he is revelling in all the luxury of breakfasting in his own apartment, or rather in his bed."

"If such are his tastes, I think he had better have remained in London," answered Mr. Anderson, somewhat offend-

ed at the unnecessary trouble a separate meal had probably occasioned in a household where one man played many parts,—an active servant of his own, with Saunders as second in command.

“What,” inquired Stuart of Halliday, “has induced Clairville to abandon England for a life so contrary to all his former pursuits and tastes? It cannot be that he is out of fashion with the ladies; that his cook has failed in some exquisite dish; or that a run of ill luck has caused his finances to want reparation?”

“Oh, no! as far as such pleasures are concerned, Clairville may still boast of his pre-eminence; it is more probable that his cup of bliss overflows, and is become nauseous from repletion.”

“Simply and shortly that he is *blasée* by that for which every other thinks him an object of envy—the love of ladies, and

the excellence of his table. As to play, we all know that the love of gaming ceases with unvaried success," observed Stuart.

"Very few know that practically ; and even the highly favoured Clairville's fortune has been at times unpropitious, however he may know less of her frowns than other men ; he lost five thousand on the St. Leger last year."

"Five thousand !" screamed Anderson, arresting, in its progress, a piece of toast and butter, which was proceeding to his mouth. "Five thousand ! So we have a man of wealth amongst us. What, Sir, may the Baronet's fortune be?"

Mr. Halliday returned no answer, treating Mr. Anderson with that contempt which the doctor of a regiment, in home quarters, has usually the satisfaction of swallowing as his portion of the notice of the society — a line of

conduct which service most effectually changes, and places the amputator of arms and legs, and curer of bodily ailments, on a footing of importance only second to that of the commander-in-chief himself. This, however, was a fact Halliday had yet to learn, and, turning from the man of medicine, after bestowing a look of annihilation, as it was intended, as a rebuke for his presumptuous familiarity, he asked Stuart how long he was likely to be detained before he joined the army.

“Anderson knows best.”

Mr. Anderson was ready with his information.

“In a few days we shall probably march forward : indeed, I do not know whether I am right in remaining, as it is idling my time away here—for of my two patients, the one is too well to require much farther nursing ; and as to the

other, poor fellow, no nursing can be of any avail."

"But yet," said Geraldine, who now ventured to speak, "Albert does not get worse."

"To your eyes so it may appear. He may linger on; but it is certain that before six months, perhaps six weeks, or even six days, he will be no more; and yet no very decided change may appear to unprofessional observation. It is *within* that the enemy is at his work of destruction. I only wish he were well enough to move to England."

"I wish his father would come from England here," said Stuart.

"If he understands the full import of the letter I wrote him," replied the surgeon, "I cannot imagine he should do otherwise, in these times when the com-

munication between Lisbon and England is so constant. Of one thing, however, I am quite certain, that whenever we leave Albert, death will soon follow. It is his spirits which keep him alive now; but with the loss of companions, and his consequent solitude, they must fail, and with them, his existence."

"All his companions need not abandon him," said Geraldine, in a low voice. "One has no duties to call her hence; and she ought not to be backward in offices of charity, who came only to visit the sick, and could still remain to attend them."

"Would you, indeed?" said Anderson, eagerly, as if the thought had just struck into his mind: "but—but a death-bed, could you support such a scene, for to that it must come?"

Geraldine shuddered. "He may recover."

“Yes,” interrupted Stuart, “Gera—Mrs. Mortimer’s care may, perhaps, be rewarded; he may be restored—he is young, and the climate—”

“Will be of no possible avail,” said Anderson, gravely; “but care and climate may soften his existence and cheer his hours, till the arrival of his father, or till he is released by death. You know that I never had but one opinion.”

“Your authority, I fear, is indisputable; but before we depart, the tardy parent may arrive.”

“Or the poor boy want no human aid.”

After breakfast, Mr. Halliday departed; his farewell to Stuart was friendly and affectionate, to Geraldine distantly polite, and to Anderson neither the one nor the other.

“That young man,” muttered Anderson, as he walked up-stairs to visit

Albert, “seems mightily alarmed for fear of turning our heads by over civility. He need not be afraid: I can exist without his attention; and as to Mrs. Mortimer, she has me, the Colonel, and Sir Francis, so his adulations can be very well spared.”

Sir Francis Clairville was the very reverse of his friend Halliday, and when he made his appearance, it was evident he despised the golden opinions of no man, and however his private feelings might have led him to prefer the lady to any other individual in the society, yet he sought equally the favour of Colonel Stuart and Mr. Anderson; and so adroitly did he administer to each his gentle flattery, that the first bore the burthen of his company with a very good grace, and the last thought him the pleasantest fellow he ever met with in his life. He soon accomplished his

wish of singing with Geraldine ; and as he really possessed great science as well as skill, she derived both pleasure and profit from his accompaniment. Colonel Stuart's praises gave additional animation and spirit to her performance ; far more so than the whispered incense of Clairville, who, as he directed her performance, or leaned over the music-book, contrived to pour into her ear, unheeded by the others, such soft words as he had ever found the sex most prone to lend a willing ear unto ; and that this customary end was not obtained he attributed to Geraldine's ignorance of the world, alarm at Colonel Stuart, a mind palled by grosser flattery, or rendered cautious by experience ; in short, any thing but that he was listened to with indifference or contempt. Such a suspicion never crossed his mind, and to do Clairville justice, he had no reason to

doubt his powers of pleasing. They had given him the eminent station he held in society, and had taught the world to forget or never discover,

“ That all was false and hollow ; that his tongue
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels : for his thoughts were low ;
To vice industrious, but to nobler deeds
Timorous and slothful ; yet he pleased the ear.”

Whatever might be Clairville's expectations, to Geraldine, at first, and on a nearer acquaintance, he was ever a person to whom she had a secret repugnance. To her his character was an enigma, but one she had no wish to solve ; and if explained must be unsatisfactory. All subjects were treated by Clairville with a deficiency of energy and listlessness of manner which might proceed from indifference or diffidence ; notwithstanding which, there were few

of which he did not seem perfectly master.

Anderson had gathered a report, that an affair of gallantry, under rather aggravated circumstances, had driven him at present from England, and yet no man's manners or conversation in general society could less denote libertinism : such was the compliment he paid to good morals, and that it was purely complimentary, Geraldine had reason to believe.

Though delicate to effeminacy in his appearance, he had shown on one or two occasions a spirit which had decidedly established his character for courage. Then, with such delicacy, strange to say, he possessed a heart hard as the adamantine rock ; but this was a secret only known to a few broken-hearted females, whose complaints were unheard ; to others, the melody of his voice, the suavity of his manners, the goodness

of his temper, were an effectual cloak which disguised the selfish, corrupt, and sordid sensualist within.

Anderson having taken Sir Francis a ride, Geraldine placed her arm within Stuart's, and they strolled forth to breathe the air by the wandering banks of the Tagus. The conversation soon fell upon Mr. Halliday, and Geraldine eagerly demanded the state of his engagement with Miss Stuart.

"In Georgiana and Halliday's opinion, the marriage may be concluded any day—in mine, it will never take place at all; and yet it is not lack of love, or fortune, or opportunity that prevents it."

"Is it, then, health? Your sister must be the invalid, however; for that suspicion can never attach to Mr. Halliday."

"No, you are wrong in your conjec-

ture ; and as with many of the pleasures of life, you are ignorant of many of its pains, the cause which makes Halliday sue at this moment in vain, you would never discover, if I had a mind to be mysterious ; but as I never was so and never will be, I will a simple tale unfold. I think you know, that when the marriage was first proposed to me, I offered, by making a settlement upon my sister, to bring the affair to an immediate issue. Lord Halliday thought his son too young to be independent ; so two years were given for their time of probation. They were both launched into the world, — a fiery ordeal for two people situated as they were, more particularly as they both became eminently the fashion ; and however philosophers may sneer, it does require good mental stamina to live unintoxicated, when those who

possess decided sway in the first circles of fashion stoop to court, flatter, admire, and befriend. Still, in Halliday's and my sister's case, I need not to have entertained a fear; their hearts never wavered in their allegiance. With the beautiful Lady —— on his arm, he had still a tender glance for Georgiana, who forgot all her attendant admirers when Halliday appeared. Such constancy promised well; and at the completion of two years there seemed to be nothing left but to marry them as a reward for their fidelity, when a discovery took place which I certainly had had hints of, but to which I attached no credit. As Halliday's friends and associates were chiefly men of wealth and expense, and his own style of living and appearance not at all discreditable to such society, I was convinced that with his scanty means he must be in

debt, and therefore offered, before his marriage took place, quietly to settle any embarrassments he might be in. Halliday's overpowering gratitude at the proposal, convinced me I had judged rightly as to the state of his finances: still, after confessing he owed a good deal of money, he seemed to hesitate about accepting my offer. His doubts appeared so extraordinary and misplaced, that a suspicion passed my mind that he feared to lay open to my view the state of his affairs, and thereby to expose some secret affairs which would prove that his constancy to my sister had not been so perfect as we had been led to imagine: but as my place was to smooth, not to raise difficulties, I begged not to be troubled with bills, figures, or attorneys, but that he would name a sum sufficient for the discharge of his debts, and promise me to apply it

to the same. Halliday was profuse in his acknowledgements, named a good round sum, for which I gave him a draft, and we parted the best friends in the world.

“ In the evening I met him at my sister’s : he was wild with spirits, which, judging from his present grave demeanour, you can hardly deem could ever have been the case ; but naturally his disposition is lively, however circumstances may have altered him, and in Georgiana’s presence now, I believe he could be gay. But that evening he had every reason to be so ; he was on the eve of marriage with a lovely being he adored, and which marriage would secure him a comfortable fortune ; whilst my gift of the morning would enable him to embark in his new career without a care to cloud his prospects. When I departed, Halli-

day went with me. I left him at his lodgings, as I thought, for the night, and returned to my home full of flattering hopes for Georgiana's future bliss. I was most desirous for their union. I liked Halliday for himself; he was a fine, manly fellow, with excellent abilities, and a heart which had remained steady, spite of all the blandishments of the other sex. They were positively *folle* with regard to him. In one house, where he was passing the Christmas, they sent for a portrait-painter to take his likeness; they would choose the colour of his coat, the manner his hair should be arranged, and many other more decided marks of their favour, they either granted, or were willing to grant. Robert, however, was proof against their seductions; they could not render him unfaithful to Georgiana. I believe many of them most devoutly

wished — but the antidote they knew not of, nor I, nor his destined bride—the love of play.

“The morning following that I had given the sum of money to Halliday, I went early to try a horse in the park, where was hardly a creature to be seen but myself and the dealer who owned the horse. In putting the horse into its paces, I perceived, in passing backwards and forwards, a man stretched upon one of the benches asleep—some low fellow, as I imagined, recovering the excesses of the night. The horse-dealer, as he stood awaiting my judgment, had more time for observation, and turning to me, when I dismounted, he said,

“That is more of a gentleman than should be lying there, I suspect; and if all those jewels on his fingers and neck be not Birmingham ware, he is not

in very safe quarters lying there, though the sun has risen.'

"We were now close to the man, and my eyes fell on some rings which he wore on the hand that covered his face, and which were exactly similar to some Georgiana had given Robert the evening before, and which had been then much admired and descanted on; they were very remarkable, and I thought it extraordinary two persons should have exactly the same. I dismissed the horse-dealer and his horse, and approaching the man, drew his hand from his face, and beheld, but too truly, the ghastly, haggard, but handsome features of Halliday! He awoke, and starting up wildly, seemed, at first, not to comprehend where he was, nor how I came with him; but in a minute or two, his memory returning, the fatal truth rushed to his mind. He clasped his hands in

agony, and pushing me violently from him, begged me to leave him, for the only kindness that I could do, was to abandon the veriest wretch upon earth to his fate—one who had lost at play, the night before, double the means he possessed in the world, supposing such means were uninjured; that his commission in the army must go, and then, when worse than a beggar, dishonoured, and despised, he could not but lose the love of my sister. The place and time, besides that Halliday was in his evening dress, and two or three persons already drawing near to observe us, was not suited for discourse. I obliged Halliday to return home with me, where the whole melancholy truth was disclosed. It appeared, that even at Westminster he had imbibed a passion for play, which grew with his growth; his means were, however,

limited, and what was a greater restraint, his opportunities. But on his entrance into the Guards, a very early run of luck enabled him to launch into the full extravagance of the passion. He lost enormous sums, won equally large, and knew all the transitions from despair to joy which a gamester's pleasure consists in: it was this shielded him from other temptations, it was this made him in one respect virtuous; constant to my sister, the dice-box was her only rival, and a formidable one it proved. He was clever, and soon became a personage of importance in the society he lived with, and at the Clubs he frequented; but his difficulties, spite of many good turns of fortune, thickened around him. It was then he became possessed of the sum of money before alluded to:—no idea ever entered his head of making the use of it he had

promised ; no, with such means of enjoyment, he sallied forth to the gaming table, the moment my carriage had driven from the door, after bringing him, as I imagined, home for the night. The expectation failed entirely ; he lost all I had given him, and as much again : it was after this night, that he wandered into the park to cool his feverish brain. The sun was just rising, when, reckless of what became of him, he threw himself upon a bench, as I found him. I could well believe what he added, that at that moment he could just as soon have cast himself into the water ; exhaustion of bodily and mental powers made him sink into sleep, till awakened by myself.

“ After this discovery and confession, you hardly need be told, that Halliday’s and my sister’s marriage did not take place. I wished the affair to be broken

off entirely, but Georgiana would not consent ; she loved too truly, and hoped, though reason would despair. Lord Halliday and myself paid his son's debts, which were enormous, but nothing would induce him to relinquish gambling. The engagement still continues between my sister and him, which they expect some day to realize : what they build their hopes upon, I know not ; any day he may be reduced to beggary, and the figure he now makes in the world can only be imputed to good fortune.

“ His father is dead, his brother does nothing for him, and no one but poor Georgiana considers him except as a man possessed with an evil spirit. She is still sanguine, that some day he will relinquish the practice, and with her seek that peace the fluctuations of his present existence deprive him of.”

“And do not you think,” inquired Geraldine, who had listened to Stuart with the greatest interest; “and do you not think, that the being removed from temptation, as he now is, may be the means of saving him?”

“So it might be, were he not accompanied by Clairville. He is a gamester, and not an unfortunate one: indeed his luck has often brought his probity into question; but, without thinking very highly of his character, I judge too favourably of the world to suppose, if such imputations had any foundation, he could be as eminent in society as he is; and besides, those who suffer by his science, or luck, may be supposed not very scrupulous in their modes of exculpating their own folly. That his object with the army is play, I am certain: he intends to pick up some stray dollars from our raw cap-

tains, and somewhat larger sums from their superior officers ; for in the highest quarters he will soon be domesticated."

"But can soldiers have time to play?"

"The active life of a soldier is comprised in a very small compass : soldiers have, therefore, plenty of leisure, when all the vices imputable to idleness, may have full sway, if only the temptation can be found. So far it may save a few tender sighs ; for love affairs, as they are most erroneously termed, (for little of that pure flame exists in such connexions,) form the chief occupation of a soldier's leisure moments. Clairville may, therefore, introduce a new order of things."

CHAPTER II.

SPITE of his supposed unworthiness, Sir Francis Clairville's favour increased in Stuart's eyes : his gentle smile, quiet, shrewd observations, and apparent satisfaction in a life so little suited to his general habits, worked their way into his good opinion, not precisely so as to take possession of the fortress, but so as to gain the extremity of the outworks. In Geraldine it was different ; to her his gentleness was heartlessness, his shrewdness cunning : she knew also what Stuart did not know, and what she was resolved he should not hear from her, that Clairville in Colonel Stu-

art's presence, and Clairville with Geraldine alone, were two very different persons ; and that such *tête-à-têtes* should happen as seldom as possible was Geraldine's object. But from a peculiar expression in Clairville's countenance, that she was grown familiar enough with, however intricate to others, she was certain that his consummate vanity imputed her avoidance of him to the charge of admiration, which made her timid, retiring, and absent in his presence, when unaccompanied by a third person.

This provoking misunderstanding, which escaped not Geraldine's penetration, led her to stay in the room one day when Colonel Stuart had retired to his to write letters, and whilst she remained occupied with her drawing, Clairville lolled on a sofa with a book in his hand.

She had reason, however, to regret

she had not followed her customary plan of escape, for, however Clairville's vanity may have suffered by the result of the interview which ensued, Geraldine's feelings received a shock which years after was not effaced.

It is not my intention to enter into the particulars of Sir Francis's opening discourse to Geraldine. It is to be hoped my readers never heard or practised the sophistry a libertine can throw over a declaration of lawless love, "alone to bless himself intent." But sophistry is too flattering a term. Clairville, for once, was plain, open, and sincere; his heart, principles, and mind, were unlocked, and their full deformity exposed to Geraldine's eyes. His admiration was coarsely told,—her own of him insinuated; he offered her wealth, protection, and his heart,—promised never to be jealous, whatever reason she might

give him,—begged her to be equally indulgent to him. Stuart's situation with the army might remove him for years from her society, or end fatally any day. With him the case would be different; he would carry her to England, where she would revel in luxury, have magnificent dresses, and, as far as men were concerned, mingle with all that were agreeable and captivating in the land.

Long did Clairville run on, spite of the burning cheek and beating heart before him; spite of the blushes and agitation, which, to his ignorance of all virtuous feelings, and shame, be it spoken, he attributed to far different motives. As he spoke, he had drawn nearer to Geraldine, and insinuating himself into a chair by her side, approached his face so near as almost to rest his cheek on her shoulder. Geraldine had ever feared, in a *tête-à-tête*

with Clairville, fine speeches, and something approaching to making love ; this she feared, and wished to shun ; but never, spite of her dislike, could she have imagined the coarseness, the unblushing effrontery, which a depraved libertine is capable of, more especially when addressed to one, who he had no cause to suppose was less pure than the generality of her sex. Had she been ugly, no one would have thought of her present abode ; but she was lovely, she was alone, and all her reserve, Stuart's dignified behaviour, the total absence of all familiarity between them even in look, could not shelter her from Clairville's suspicions, or rather certainties. Far from it : her behaviour only convinced him the more, and he judged, from himself, that she was no novice in the art of intrigue, and that her reserve was the very master-piece of

hypocrisy : which rather increased than diminished his admiration.

Well might Geraldine have exclaimed, when at length Clairville paused, “Would that these eyes had lightning to crush you with their glance !” But though she spoke not, there was a withering look in their expression, which made the stout heart of Clairville even quail.

“ You have been very explicit,” she said at length ; “ it is impossible almost to mistake your meaning ; but yet the proposal is so extraordinary, so unlooked for—I had so little reason to expect such a proof of your admiration, so little idea of the effect my beauty might produce, that again I must be assured that I am not mistaken when I consider you design me the honour of becoming the companion of your leisure moments, when I am to drive from you the mon-

ster *ennui* by my—*love*,—at least such love as wealth can buy ; that I am to be clothed, nourished, and supported at your charge ; and when I am bedecked with silk and jewels, in rooms all fragrance and finery, I am to be your idol or slave, whom you will daily visit, and whom your companions may admire or insult—for such terms will then be synonymous—and that, when it is your good pleasure to be rid of me, I am to pass into the hands of your friends, or any other of the male sex who will take pity upon an outcast ; for which enviable lot I am to forfeit my own esteem, the good opinion of every one worthy on earth, and my hopes of happiness in heaven !”

Clairville looked pale at this address, but, assuming his customary heartless smile, nothing daunted, said, “ My dear angel, did you begin life with a metho-

dist lover ? I never heard better preaching in a pulpit."

"A methodist ! I a methodist !" and Geraldine caught the hand which attempted to seize hers, and threw it from her : "it were well, perhaps, if I was one ; at least, it would have saved me this degradation."

"You confess, then, you are degraded."

"By your offers—your love."

"And does not the love of others degrade you ? I am not married, I have no wife !"

Geraldine's burning cheeks, and eyes as if darting from their sockets, showed how well this thrust had reached home ; but she was in too high a state of excitement to submit peaceably to such imputations. Drawing up her beautiful form to its full height, and her beautiful lip curling in disdain,

"If you allude to Colonel Stuart, his

friendship is my pride, my honour, my support ; and, if even I was what I know that sneer denotes, his mistress, wretched as I should be—lost, degraded, still, if such misery should have any alleviation, if such a state could have an excuse, it would be in favour of such as him—a man of honour, temper, feeling, talents ; one whom the whole world respects for his courage, generosity, and humanity. If I could be the abject thing you suspect, it would be for such as him, not for such as you.”

“ Then you love Stuart.”

“ I love his virtue.”

“ Virtue !” and Clairville smiled contemptuously. Geraldine heeded not his smile ; she moved as if to leave the room, Clairville detained her.

“ You have been very angry, and I have for the present offended you ; but, as neither your dislike nor your abuse

can in the least alter my admiration of you, I beg you will always consider me your adorer, and, if your opinion should change of others—for the fancies of this world are but unstable things—remember, in me you will ever find a protector; and let me observe, the offers of an unmarried man are not to be despised, or placed in competition with those of one who, however lightly he may consider such ties, is shackled by those which, in the cant of the world, are called sacred, and to the meanest comprehension are indissoluble.”

Sir Francis Clairville ceased, caught Geraldine's hand, and pressed it to his lips ere she could draw it from him, heaved an affected sigh, bowed profoundly and retired, not to meditate and repent, but to join Anderson in a morning-ride, to talk and laugh upon whatever subject might present itself.

Still, when he returned home, a flash of uneasiness rushed to his mind. Was Colonel Stuart acquainted with what had passed? Clairville was no coward, but he well knew that the insult would not be endured tamely by a man of Stuart's spirit and profession, if Geraldine had complained to him. Satisfaction would be demanded, and satisfaction he must give. Such were his fears, but his hopes predominated; and though ready to meet him on any terms, Clairville loved the good things of this life too well not secretly to lean to the pacific, and his hopes for so favourable a result rested on Geraldine's discretion. She would not endanger the life of her lover; it could not be Geraldine's interest (and none but selfish motives were ever present to Clairville) to place Colonel Stuart in the predicament of perhaps losing his life, though with the

chance of gaining her revenge upon himself.

Clairville was right; by a violent effort Geraldine concealed her feelings, and whilst the insults she had received were closely locked in her bosom, she appeared at dinner, and met the unchanged, smiling hypocrite Clairville, with calmness sufficient to blind Stuart as to there being any disagreement between them, but not enough to prevent his eager inquiry, judging from her dejected air, if she were not suffering from indisposition. Geraldine complained of cold. Stuart was full of anxiety, Anderson hardly less so, and the audacious Sir Francis talked of the damp situation of the house, of an ague in the village, and mentioned various cures for the same, which being ridiculed by Anderson, the conversation fell upon medicine generally, and was speedily

far removed, as Clairville intended, from the original topic of discourse—Geraldine.

As the object of Sir Francis Clairville's stay at A—— was baffled, Geraldine hoped he would wave his personal convenience, and not await Colonel Stuart's departure; but she was mistaken. Clairville liked Geraldine, but he liked his own comfort better; and, as the travelling with Colonel Stuart was to the advantage of Clairville, with him he intended to go, however his protracted stay might be annoying to Geraldine.

To do Clairville justice, however, he behaved better than many persons have done under similar circumstances. He did not fall into love's opposite extreme, and, because scorned, hate—because refused, abuse—and because uncomplained of, complain. Clairville was as civil to

Geraldine in the presence of others as it was necessary to be ; and without other society she took care never to be with him. But a much greater grief than any misery Clairville could inflict was in store—Stuart's departure ! Hour after hour, day after day crept on, and now but a very short period and they would separate for ever !

There are griefs which admit of hope ; sorrows that even in their excess bring their consolation ; and even blank despair, when all hope is ended, is a torpid state, which leaves the wretch unbounded freedom to lament, and saves the conflict between contending hopes and fears which tear the poor human frame to atoms ; but Geraldine's and Stuart's case was too peculiar to admit of any comparison. They were young, but the prospect of life was only increasing their term of separation ; they loved,

but never could meet. She had no friend save him ; but his friendship she must conceal, and shun his presence : they were formed to walk the rugged path of life together ; but such similitude was only in mockery ; for had the one been a sovereign on a throne, and the other a beggar at his gate, their states could not be more adverse. What a cheerless blank was to them that future, which to so many was full of life and hope ! How vain their wealth, beauty, health, talents, or, more than vain, how cruel such gifts, when, as far as happiness is concerned, it proved their utter futility !

Stuart had proceeded many miles on his journey from A——, ere he became conscious that he had companions, or that those companions had made many unheeded efforts at conversation ; but

they had no reason for offence, for, in after days, with those far more prone to command attention and fitted to receive it, his truant thoughts would fly

“To the vain bosom of his distant fair.”

The thousand interests of a profession he loved; the charms of society; the calls of business, were never neglected by Stuart, and seemed to fill his mind alone; but it was only ‘seeming,’ for in his heart’s core there was a rock of sadness which never withered, and never was unfelt: years passed away before they met again, but never for one hour was Geraldine forgotten. If such was the case with him, who led a life of activity and danger, how could the weaker sex fare? Poor Geraldine!

The bustle of departure was over; a mournful silence had succeeded to the trampling of horses and cries of ser-

vants, and so still did the palace appear, that it might be imagined, with Colonel Stuart had vanished all of life that had lately dwelt in the mansion. With true vulgar spirit, the few servants remaining, profiting by the absence of authority, to divert their *ennui* or show their independence, sallied forth in quest of amusement, as soon as their late masters had departed, leaving Albert Douglas and Geraldine alone in the house. Of this Albert was the first to make the discovery. After waiting far beyond the usual time for some one to bring him his customary refreshment, faint, and yet more sad than faint, for Geraldine's desertion preyed most upon his mind, he determined, as the lengthened shadows showed the approach of evening, to wander forth from his own room, and see if indeed, as he sus-

pected, he was left to die alone. He drew his feeble limbs along the spacious corridor ; all the doors of the apartment stood open ; Stuart's, Clairville's, Anderson's, all showed recent signs of habitation, and present desertion : at length he gained the usual sitting-room ; the breakfast was still on the table as they had left it ; a candle yet was burning which had been required for sealing letters, whilst torn papers and newspapers were scattered about the room : no voice answered Albert's call. "Has Geraldine vanished with Stuart?" he thought, with something of a shudder. He traversed room after room, and, as his pale and emaciated form was reflected in the mirrors around him, he looked like a perturbed ghost wandering in scenes of former enjoyment.

"These desolate apartments," he ex-

claimed, "do well to prepare me for the grave, which can change but little my spiritual appearance."

Albert sighed heavily: he was not alone; a responsive sigh echoed from an adjoining apartment: he rushed forward. On the cold marble floor, her black hair in wild disorder, lay the unfortunate Geraldine; there had she fallen when Stuart's parting look met her gaze, and there had she remained, with a very few intervals of sensibility, for many hours; the holiday the servants had given themselves saved her from all intrusion, and, but for Albert, there she might have expired. Albert, weak and faint, could only throw himself by her side, call upon her name, and clasp his burning hand in hers, cold as marble. At length, by raising her head on his knee, removing her hair from her face, and allowing the air to blow freely around

her, her senses returned — they returned to tell her she was desolate, that her only friend was gone. But, as her mind became less confused, Albert's situation aroused other thoughts: he who seldom left his room, was stretched on the cold marble floor, with windows pouring in the evening air around him; he who required constant attention, had been neglected for many hours; he to whom the slightest agitation might produce instant death, was weeping torrents over her. She started up, and with wild earnestness begged him to regain his apartment.

“You need not be alarmed,” said Albert, with a low hollow voice, which showed too truly the truth of his words; “you need not fear for me,—nothing can harm me now; the hand of death is upon me, and it was not to die alone, which made me seek you.”

Geraldine knew that in an adjoining apartment was a cordial which once, when Albert had been nearly exhausted, Anderson had administered with good effect. This she eagerly sought, and prevailed upon Albert to swallow a small quantity, and then, feeble as she was, assisted him to his apartment, where having seen him stretched on his bed, she flew to summons the servants. By this time the one who now particularly attended upon Douglas, having been nearly the whole day from home, bethought him of the new office the reduction in the establishment had placed him in, and made his tardy appearance. Geraldine had no time or spirits to blame ; she therefore only desired him instantly to attend Mr. Douglas, whilst a thought did cross her mind how different his treatment would be if Stuart or even Anderson were suddenly to

make their appearance, and discover the negligence of those they had left with so many cautions as to attention ; but it was now vain to think of those who were far away ; and, bending her steps towards the terrace walk, she calmed her agitated mind by silent prayer for support in that trial which, from Albert's exhaustion and late imprudence, she saw would speedily await him and her.

On her return she found the poor invalid in bed, and apparently asleep, if sleep could be called that repose which was ever mingled by moans and faint exclamations, the word " father " being the only audible word which met Geraldine's ear. The night closed in, and Albert's watchful nurse, having placed the lamp at the farther extremity of the chamber, seated herself by his bed-side, holding one of his burning hands in

her's, whilst with her other she wiped away the cold drops which rose to his face, and with which often mingled those of affliction as well as those of weakness, showing the sad nature of his sleeping thoughts.

Albert at length, with a convulsive start, awakened. Geraldine administered a composing draught.

“ You are very kind,” said the dying youth, “ but it is of no use : if it would enable me to live long enough to see my father, I should be content : but that is vain to hope for ; he knows not my danger ; the letter to announce it has miscarried. You must not think that want of affection keeps him away ; he loves me tenderly, and so does my poor mother. And I have also a sister as handsome as you, and as gentle and affectionate ; she will mourn for her poor Albert ; and my other sisters,

though so young, I think will shed a tear when they think of my distant grave." After an ineffectual effort on Geraldine's part to induce Albert not to exhaust himself by speaking, he resumed; "No, no, I must talk whilst I am able: thinking wears this shattered frame as much as speaking; and still I have a request to make of you, Mrs. Mortimer, which you *must* promise me to grant."

"Well, I promise."

"When I am dead, you must seek my father—"

"I!"

"Yes, I implore you, see my parents; tell them that I died resigned,—that they were ever in my mind; and do not conceal all your care of me—how you watched me, nursed me, admonished me, softened the last period of my existence by instilling into my

mind those divine truths, which, in my boyish folly, I had lived unmindful of, and which, if it had pleased Heaven to spare me, would have made me run the remainder of my course very differently —But how dare I pronounce? perhaps my early death is in mercy.” And Albert raised his eyes to Heaven with such a calm expression of resignation, that Geraldine could hardly forbear the wish that the spirit would now depart. But it was yet to struggle a little longer; he continued. “You will find in my writing-box a letter to my father; the subject is yourself. You are friendless and alone in the world. I have implored my father, for the sake of his dying son, and as some return for your kindness, not to let you continue so, but to befriend, protect, support you, beneath his roof.”

“My dear Albert, do not think of

me ; if it is possible, I will see your father, answer all his inquiries, and tell him all you could wish him to know ; but as to myself, I cannot explain my story, and therefore my character must suffer. No one but Colonel Stuart knows both the one and the other,—to him alone therefore can I look for the bread I eat ; in others I can only excite pity, which, if unmingled with respect, I own is a boon I despise.”

“ My father is no bigot,” answered Albert, warmly ; “ he does not expect perfection from any one—he studies the Scriptures, and knows and practises the beautiful lessons of charity they inculcate ; not only the charity of alms-giving, but that which thinketh no evil. But,” he continued, more calmly, “ I have no fear, your countenance will be a passport to his heart ; your kindness alone will speak volumes as to your cha-

racter ; common gratitude alone will make him to you as a father."

At that moment a deep and heavy sigh burst from the opposite side of the bed. Albert started up, and with a sudden effort of strength, tore aside the curtain ; the tall figure of a man appeared.

"My father, my beloved father!" and Albert attempted to throw himself forward to embrace him. Mr. Douglas caught him to his heart—for a moment his pressure was returned—for an instant the warm breath of his son had passed his cheek—the next, the earthly tenement alone filled his arms. The breaking inwardly of an abscess, occasioned by sudden agitation and exertion, produced instant death, in a manner which might be termed merciful, by those who have witnessed the lingering, painful death too many experience who suffer under the painful hand of consumption.

CHAPTER III.

LETTER FROM GERALDINE TO STUART.

“THE more I consider the step I have taken, the more satisfied am I with its being right; that you may agree with me in opinion, is my most fervent wish. I know the idea of dependence is hateful to you, nor is such feeling strange; but pray consider, that in entering the family of Mr. Douglas, as *companion* to his daughters, (start not at the word,) I rather diminish the sense of servitude, which would be otherwise weighty indeed, if I lived in his house only as a creature of bounty,

an object of charity, useless, and a beggar !

“ Now, if my situation is unpleasing, I may quit it without offence, and seek a place as governess elsewhere ; my wages will procure me clothes, and my acquirements, when imparted to his children, repay in some measure my obligations to Mr. Douglas. Poor Albert gave me a favourable opinion of those with whom I am about to live, which is confirmed every moment I see more of his father. His kindness to me is extreme ; he says he is bound in gratitude to the memory of his son to befriend me ; his dying words, and the letter he left, far, far over-rating my poor services, are to him obligatory ties, which nothing should induce him not to perform to the very letter. The feeling of surprise which even such slender good offices as mine create, gives to me, who in truth

know little of the world, an idea that selfishness is rather more predominant therein, and brotherly kindness much less so, than I could hope for the honour of mankind were the case. Shall I tell you what was the strongest objection I secretly felt at quitting Portugal? It was not quitting the asylum of the friendly nuns, their gloomy walls, and more captivating religious ceremonies; but it was regret at leaving the land containing my only friend, placing that barrier, the sea, between him and me; preventing all power of joining him if ill, and trusting that solace to absence, letters, to the mercy of the wind and waves. But such reasoning it is vain to indulge; they tell me, too, the army is entering Spain—God protect you and it!

“Our voyage has as yet been prosperous; but to my companion, alas! it

is a matter of indifference ; the wildest storm or most glassy sea could not draw him from the contemplation of his own sad thoughts. With me, he will talk for hours of his son, and will listen to all I have to relate concerning him during my stay at A——. With A—— are connected so many of my most constant thoughts, that the subject is naturally interesting ; though all the feelings that draw me back to the remembrance of that spot, are not centred, as with Mr. Douglas, in the tomb of poor Albert !”

“PLYMOUTH.

“WE arrived last night. Once more I am in England. How strange has been my life ; the events of years crowded into a few months, the rest a dreary blank. I dread the sight of every one, and shrink from the gaze of all around.

But why should I tremble? it is impossible any one should know me. Even if I returned in splendour and triumph, I should be equally a stranger ; but still, when they address me by the name of Mortimer, my conscience rushes to my cheeks ; I feel an impostor, one to be despised, hated ; and yet I am an object of the kindest attention, and in Mr. Douglas I find all that tenderness, suavity, and gentlemanlike feeling, the want of which nearly broke my heart seven years ago, in him with whom I last trod the English shores.

“ We proceed on our journey to-morrow to the seat of Mr. Douglas. How often did poor Albert expatiate on its beauties ! Mr. Douglas is impatient to be at home, yet dreads the meeting with his family. It is a satisfaction to me to know that he considers my presence as essential to their comfort, as,

excepting the last dying glance, and a part of the previous conversation which he overheard addressed to myself, the unfortunate father has no more to relate of his son ; all, therefore, of those sad particulars of the beloved dead, which to the survivors is of so much painful and tender interest, must rest with me to relate."

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

"FROM a place which combines all that is beautiful in nature with every charm art can give, I now address you ; where every fragrant flower from every clime lends its perfume to the air ; every apartment has its separate luxury and comfort ; all breathes peace around. From such a place I write to you ; just such a one as I have often pictured in my waking dreams, but never thought to be an inhabitant of, but which now I

am told to consider as my home. In these smooth walks may I ramble, by that river may I meditate, in that library may I revel in unbounded delight ; with those instruments may I awaken all of harmony my powers can command ; and to crown all, words of kindness, and, dare I pronounce it ? of affection, are addressed to me—an outcast and stranger, unknown, and apparently friendless ! Such is my present fate.

“ I have two nominal pupils, very pretty little girls of nine and ten years of age. I instruct them in music, French, and Spanish ; and in their eldest sister, a lovely girl of nineteen years of age, I have found a companion and friend whom I almost adore. To her I could well find it in my heart to confide my story ; but for her own sake I refrain. Why open her unsuspecting

mind to griefs she is as yet ignorant of, to sorrows which advancing years will bring her too fatally the knowledge of? Her disposition, independent of late melancholy causes, seems pensive, and would lead me to imagine, that, young as she is, her path of life has brought forth thorns as well as roses. But of this I cannot be certain; poor Albert's fate has thrown a shade over all here, which may well for a time render so gentle a being as Charlotte restless, despairing, comfortless, forlorn. Strange as it may seem, it is this shade, this veil of sadness, which renders me so much at home, which draws the bond of union so close between me and those with whom I live; much more than could be the case if all was glare, splendour, revelry, and laughter. That one day smiles and society, merriment and dancing, may return to these walls, is

my most ardent wish; but then *my* sense of solitude will begin: that sad feeling which weighs down my heart, is better suited to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.”

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

“CHARLOTTE loves. The other day, as we roamed through the woods just bursting into blossom, the truth escaped her; but her lover has nothing but his profession to depend on; a harsh father married to a second wife, and with a second race of children. Such obstacles have prevented the union which, had his circumstances been somewhat more flourishing, her parents would have rejoiced in. Her lover is a sailor, and not an unprosperous one, for he has advanced rapidly, without interest or friend, by merit alone. The sea has been his home; on that he has lived and

acquired friends, protectors, and even money, though not enough to marry upon. He is handsome, Charlotte says ; and, what is more, actually flatters me by tracing a resemblance between him and me. The young lovers met in London, and only there. What a strange atmosphere for so steady a passion to have taken root and flourished ! All her little tales, which by degrees are imparted to me, of hopes and fears, tenderness, attention, and sometimes distress, are all connected with crowded drawing-rooms, balls, plays, and operas ; but yet no Arcadian shepherdess ever loved more truly, and with a purer, more holy flame : how little, therefore, has time, place, and circumstance to do with the heart ! He who so well described the solitude of a crowd, might improve the picture, and pourtray that bright ray in an otherwise cheerless multitude, when

a responsive chord is found to answer to the feelings in your own bosom, and proclaims you are *not* alone—that the desert of the mind you dwell in is no longer so.”

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

“ WITH almost breathless agitation I address you : a discovery I have made this morning almost deprives me of the power of writing — Charlotte’s lover, the constant subject of our discourse, is no other than my brother, Arthur Hamilton. When first she pronounced the name, I started, but still doubted : conviction gradually became as clear as the day ; the name, age, profession, father. How proud did I feel that he should have inspired a passion in so charming a girl ! but yet how much sorrow was mingled with my pride ! I, his sister, dared not acknowledge my

relationship to one who I was told was perfection — dared not even sigh, for fear that sigh should betray the interest I felt: how eagerly did I then draw forth again the tale of her love—with what redoubled pleasure listen to the oft-told tale!”

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

“THE necessity for writing often precludes the possibility; and, with an agitated mind and beating heart, to enter into minute or even coherent details, is an effort which appears to me beyond the powers of humanity. I never possessed the gift of fluency of speech, and, in writing, my feeble powers can only bear the judgment of a most lenient eye: how, then, am I to explain to you all that has lately passed, so that you should not consider me ungrateful, ungenerous,

selfish, and mean-spirited? But it matters not, and, perhaps, it would be well if you did think so, and then you would despise and forget me—forget one who has promised to forget you. Perhaps I was wrong in ever writing to you at all; but friendless as I was, could I do otherwise, either as I regarded myself or you? But do not think, because I am now no longer desolate, I am learning prudence, and am beginning to consult propriety, because more convenient and better policy: no; no voice but one could make me act as I have done—that of a brother.

“Poor Albert’s death enabling Mr. Douglas to provide for his daughters much more liberally than he had otherwise intended, the obstacle to Charlotte’s union with Arthur Hamilton was removed; and about ten days back, his spirits being sufficiently restored, so as

to make him think less of the dead and more of the living, he informed Charlotte of his intentions, and a letter was dispatched to the same effect to my brother. The happiness of dear Charlotte at her projected union, I need not describe ; her love is as deep as disinterested ; her satisfaction seemed to disseminate itself among those around her, and once more smiles reigned beneath her father's roof. My pleasure was most sincere, and equally felt for both parties—though for one alone was I enabled to express any interest. As the probability was that the letter would be some time ere it reached Arthur, I determined to await his answer before I took any steps to remove myself from the Douglas's ; as, painful as is the deception my fate has obliged me to practise, in my brother's presence I was assured it would be impossible.—

Before he arrived to claim his bride, my plan was formed again to try my fortune on the wide world, in that capacity which is alone open to me—a governess! Vain were all my hopes, plans, and fears. On Monday evening we were seated in the drawing-room, the tea was just removed, and Mr. Douglas was preparing, as is our regular custom, to read aloud whilst we females worked, when a sound of carriage wheels, followed by a slight bustle in the hall, and a hasty shutting and opening of doors, gave a very short moment for us to anticipate the truth—it was Arthur! Hardly were their hopes and my fears aroused, ere he was in the presence of the Douglas's, and locked in the embraces of all but her who, next to his destined bride, had the greatest right to such a mark of affection! He was in deep mourning.

“ It was some time before the party were sufficiently composed to remember my existence. Why I did not escape to my own room, I know not, but I felt rooted to the ground, and that, if I moved, I should fall. We were introduced : he hardly looked at me, and as for myself, trembling and ready to faint, I at length gained power to hasten to my room, but not before I had gathered that the mourning he wore was for *a father* ! It was this event which, placing him in sudden independence, made him hasten to claim his wife, unaware of Mr. Douglas’s generous intentions. This intelligence, my brother’s sudden arrival, his matured appearance, which had increased a tinge of asperity his features had ever possessed, made me feel as in a dream, and it was not till hours of thought and bitter tears were over, that the delusion seemed to pass

away, and the melancholy reality was open to my view. Sleep was out of the question, and the next morning, before, as I imagined, any human being was stirring, I hastened into the pleasure-ground, to gain refreshment and strength by the morning air. One fact seemed decided: my appearance had not excited any emotion in my brother, who had, probably from long absence, forgotten the person of one whom of course, he could only think of as an inhabitant of the grave. I had wandered some distance, when I heard footsteps advancing, and raising my eyes through the tears which filled them, they fell upon Arthur himself, apparently as profoundly occupied with his own thoughts as I could be. He seemed not to observe me, and, hoping to escape his notice, I moved on as softly and swiftly as possible. I was past him, actually beyond

him ; I breathed more freely, when I heard him stop ; I flew forward ; what was my dismay when I found he had turned back, and was actually in pursuit, and that it was my name, my own name, Geraldine—Geraldine Hamilton which he pronounced ! The next moment my arm was violently seized, and a voice, in which there was something of tenderness, but more of anger, demanded why I avoided him, and if I did not know him. His manner, abrupt if not rude, the dark flashing of his eye, and the discovery he had made of my identity, destroyed the small portion of energy which the evening before had left me—I fell senseless at my brother's feet.

“ But it is useless to enter into every particular. When I recovered, I found myself in Arthur's arms, his air of severity somewhat abated : he carried me to a neighbouring bench, where in

time I recovered myself, and where a long conversation ensued.

“ Arthur loves me, but we have been long separated, and the sea has been a rude school for him to learn human nature. Most assuredly, my conduct has not been such as to escape all suspicion. I repeated my whole story, and though at last I succeeded in convincing him that, however appearances were against me, my virtue was as pure as if I had never quitted my father's roof, yet still, in going back to my original fault, the quitting his protection, the voice of my reasoning was vain. My misery at Newtown Hamilton was treated as discontent, *ennui*, and early indulgence—my escape romantic folly ; your behaviour he gave full credit to, considering all things ; but again my visiting you at A—— was madness, worse than my original fault, which had

that excuse—contempt of the world, and overweening confidence in my own strength of mind. After he had exhausted his invectives as to my conduct, and lamented bitterly that I had not had fortitude to support the life in Ireland for one little year more, when he would have carried me off from my prison-house with a mind unoppressed by my present feelings, he became more gentle in his demeanour—told me he claimed me as his own, and half playfully, half seriously, said he should be my guardian, friend, or tyrant, whatever I chose to call him, but that with him I must remain till a husband claimed his right over me. I could only answer with tears at the severity of his words, and with thanks for the kindness which, through the mist of harshness, I ever saw lurking at the bottom of all he said. My nerves, however, were ter-

ribly shaken at his presence ; and his very look, spite of his handsome features, withered my heart in my bosom. My brother, in pity, at last assumed more gentleness ; but we had yet another subject to discuss, my correspondence with you :—I must relinquish it—this letter is my last, but before I conclude, I must inform you of some particulars.

“ It appears that a few years back my father made a will entirely in favour of his wife and her children, not naming my brother : of this will my brother was aware, and consequently never dreamed of succeeding to his property, any more than if such an event was entirely unprecedented. At his death, when he went to pay the last duties to his remains—it was only from a sense of duty, and with no other expectation, to his utter surprise he found himself greeted as the heir of all. His father’s will in

his second wife's favour, was not signed ; Arthur, therefore, succeeded as a matter of course. Mrs. Hamilton was much disappointed, but, as she was handsomely provided for by marriage settlements, she had no just cause of complaint. Once more in Ireland, Arthur was extremely desirous to hear all he could on the subject of my death, the confused history of which had given him the most untoward suspicions. To Miss Foster he applied for information. Poor Kitty could not bear close examination ; in her own mind she was convinced I existed, though she had ever expressed a contrary opinion, to save pursuit and the calumny of the world ; but the earnestness of my brother's appeal drew from her all she knew, and all she feared. To this information Arthur combined the accounts Charlotte's let-

ters had contained of a female relation of Colonel Stuart's, who had attended Albert's dying moments ; and whom in consequence, her father had befriended, and brought home to be their inmate. He arrived, therefore, at this house fully prepared to meet me ; nor is it surprising that, with such information, he should judge of me with more severity than I deserve.

“ My name is now again acknowledged, my story known : the Douglas's judge more mildly than my brother ; they are, in truth, better acquainted with me. As to Charlotte, her raptures at finding in me a sister might almost make me vain, or happy—the latter cannot be. Adieu ! may God bless and preserve you ; may every happiness be yours ! Forget Geraldine, forget her who never whilst breath endures will

cease to recollect you. Adieu ! the tears fall from my eyes as I write—I hear the voice of my brother, I must conclude. Again, God bless you !

“GERALDINE HAMILTON.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE last chapter will have detailed the chain of events which restored Geraldine to her country, name, and place in society, and secured to her a home and comparative independence. But, was she happy? Alas! the human heart is weak, difficult to comprehend; it is as well not to probe too deeply into its secrets, not to be too curious to know why a cloud still hung upon her brow, and why those fearful things, gazettes extraordinary, made the colour fly from her cheeks at their arrival, and the tears tremble in her eyes till their contents

were disclosed, and her fears for the moment allayed.

Charlotte and Arthur were married: a fortnight was given for the honeymoon, which was spent at Lyme; that over, they returned to Mr. Douglas's, where having spent a few days, they departed, carrying off Geraldine to a small mansion on the estate and adjoining the park of the Earl of Ashleigh, within a few miles of Portsmouth, where Captain Hamilton's affairs obliging him to be, he became the occupier of a very pretty and well furnished abode, called Grove Cottage. In this cottage Geraldine passed much of her time in solitude; the new married pair spent much of theirs abroad, walking or driving, and, when within, their devotion to each other was too great for Geraldine to escape the common lot of a third person in similar cases, being

in fact, though not in act, sent to Coventry : a penance which, however, she bore with proper resignation ; time, she knew, must bring the cure. Her wish had been to remain with Mr. and Mrs. Douglas for some little time longer, but her brother was peremptory and herself dependant ; to Grove Cottage she accordingly came. One pleasure she now enjoyed,—corresponding with Miss Foster ; in that quarter her story needed no extenuation, and, though the circumstances might have been far more flagrant, the benevolent Kitty Foster, even in the case of an utter stranger, would have had milk of human kindness sufficient to have pardoned them all ; but how much more so when it was the conduct of Geraldine Hamilton which was in question : in that case she converted all that was wrong into right, censure into praise, and pain into plea-

sure. Geraldine could do no wrong. In return for her friend's tale, Miss Foster had a little humble narrative of her own. A widower, rich, good-tempered, not childless, nor well-born, but sensible, of fair appearance, and some twenty years her senior, solicited her hand. The advantages and disadvantages of such a marriage seemed pretty nearly balanced, and Geraldine's opinion was to turn the scale: this opinion was, happily for Mr. Keene, favourable, and was just such as Miss Foster hoped to receive, and which her lover dared not expect from so grand and clever a lady as Kitty, in the simplicity of her heart, had portrayed Geraldine.

Mrs. Keene, as she shortly became, was no sooner in possession of a large house in a pleasant quarter of Dublin, than she was most urgent for Geraldine to visit her. This proposal was far

from even agreeable in name, but to act upon, would have been terrific ; every thing connected with Ireland, except Mrs. Keene herself, was to Geraldine's mind odious ; and when her brother talked of the necessity of living occasionally at Newtown Hamilton, a death-like sensation came over his sister's heart, and all the misery and disappointment she had there encountered, rushed again to her mind, and she became painfully sensible of her utter helplessness as to locomotion ; for where her brother chose to drag her, she must follow. Arthur's intentions were kind ; he meant to be useful to, and even to gain ascendancy over his sister's mind, through the medium of her affections ; but he evidently mistrusted her capability of properly guiding herself ; and whilst his wife was all-confiding love and open-heartedness with her sister-in-law, Captain Hamilton's man-

ner was always constrained, as if not perfectly at his ease, particularly if a cloud hung upon her brow when foreign news was discussed, or she showed interest in the fate of any female, whether in fiction or reality, whose story bore greater evidence of feeling than discretion.

About the latter end of September, the discourse of the few visitors who frequented Grove Cottage, was enlivened by a topic of annual interest, namely, the expected arrival of the Earl and Countess of Ashleigh at Ashleigh Park. This important bit of news created much talk and much expectation, and at length reached its greatest magnitude of interest, by the positive arrival of the Earl and Countess, with a large party, whose names were dubious. A gentleman, evidently from the Park, had been seen shooting in a particular turnip-

field the day following, and another gentleman was heard rating his dog in an opposite direction, supposed to be the Earl himself. Such news, however, uninteresting and even wearisome, Mrs. Hamilton was playfully accused one day, by her husband, of having rather encouraged than otherwise, by a most inopportune smile of satisfaction. She repelled the attack by urging that she had been forced to such an act of complacency, by observing the disdainful, almost insulting curl of her husband's lip upon the married bliss of the Earl and Countess being alluded to.

"My brother," observed Geraldine, "is spoiled for all mediocrity in wedded bliss."

"I am sure," answered Arthur, "the wedded bliss of this Earl and Countess is far below mediocrity."

“Are they then at open war?” inquired his wife.

“Not quite so bad, my dear Charlotte; only slight skirmishes.”

“And pray, my dear Arthur, who told you?”

“My own observation.”

“What! are you acquainted with the Ashleighs?”

“No—yes; I once saw Lady Ashleigh — with Lord Ashleigh I have no acquaintance.”

“And do you mean,” said Mrs. Hamilton, “that once seeing Lady Ashleigh could open to your view a fact of such importance as her matrimonial unhappiness or felicity?”

“The time I speak of told me a great deal, all of which you shall hear, if Geraldine will lay down her eternal newspaper, and come and sit by my side, and you, love, on the other.—Now we are

very well, and I will tell you a tale, with this proviso—I am to tell it my own way, and, however prosy, you are not to yawn, and however sad, you are not to cry.

“It was in the year —— that I was made first lieutenant to a frigate commanded by Captain Henry Elliot, stationed in the West Indies. You ladies know so little of nautical matters, that you can have no conception of the awful distance that may be preserved between even the first and second in command on board a ship, without any demerit in those below, or pride in those above. The necessity for rigid discipline, and the difficulty in a single individual to command respect where he lowers himself to familiarity, is the best excuse for, I must say, a most unnatural state of society, particularly amongst those who have so many links of union, having

equal interests, pleasures, and pains. But whatever may be the tastes or wisdom of others, Henry Elliot was a striking exception to the common rule. Few would have succeeded so well, however, I suspect; but as it was, I profited, and found in him a friend as well as a commander and hero, and the happiness I enjoyed in his ship was greater than I had ever experienced since I quitted my good aunt and uncle Langton's roof. Many a fine fellow I had sailed with, but one like Elliot I believed did not exist. So bold, yet so gentle; so well informed of all that related to his profession, and yet by no means ignorant on any other subject; perfectly aware of the duty of all beneath him, yet familiar with all: the secret lay in his temper, and his never being otherwise than gentleman-like: this gained him all hearts,

and yet raised a barrier between him and all to whom he was superior. He was very handsome, perfectly accessible, good-humoured, and with the spirit of a lion, the more to be dreaded, I ought to say admired, because it was without the slightest particle of passion, but the genuine high feeling of a manly mind, resolute in his own sense of right, and as conscious of his superiority as of his talents and station. He was a man to have led the world blindfold, and his crew adored him ; there was nothing he could not do with them ; and as to me, it seemed that our frigate was invincible, such wonders did she perform under Elliot's command.

“ But even in him, the apparently perfect being, a little flaw caught my microscopic eye. You ladies, perhaps, will not think the worse of him ; but I, a rough sailor, must own that in the so-

cial intercourse our friendship allowed, I did feel a pang when I found out that he liked not his profession. This was to me a sad discovery, but what he lost of my admiration he gained in pity. His heart was not with his vessel; his dreams were of England, women, theatres, music, horses, and books—all that he had left—all that sailors should forget exists. I could not understand his feelings, my education and his had been so very different, and at that time I knew nothing of life but on the sea. Elliot was the youngest son of a younger son, with hardly any fortune, but highly connected, and though without money, knowing nothing of poverty and every thing of luxury. He was brought up by the head of the family, knew every comfort at home, and shared with his cousins the promiscuous education of a public school, till he went to sea. He returned

a man ; his uncle's house was still his home, the best society open to him, where his looks, manners, and talents soon made him a decided favourite. It was then the sea began to lack interest, but he had no alternative ; his uncle's influence procured him a ship, he was called a lucky dog by those of his profession, a miserable and unfortunate one by his St. James's-street friends : to poor Elliot, their pity or envy was all one ; to sea he went, where I found him such as I have described. My attachment to him increased every hour, and made that scene I was fated to witness, the most cruel of my life—his death-bed ! He died of the yellow-fever. Young as he was, he seemed not to regret life. A day or two before his death he confided to me what I had before suspected—he loved. He begged me to seek her he had first and always loved — to give her

the picture of herself she had once bestowed on him, and to tell her he remembered her with his dying breath, and prayed Heaven to bless her: this beloved being was Lady Ashleigh."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Geraldine, "and she has forgotten her lover and married another!"

"Elliot was alive when Lord and Lady Ashleigh were married," said Arthur, calmly.

"Alive! my dear love, impossible! and for a married woman he nourished such a passion," said Mrs. Hamilton, turning pale at the idea of so bad a compliment, to say the least of it, being paid to the holy state of marriage.

"Such things are, my pretty Charlotte; but in this wicked world of ours they are seldom as justifiable as Elliot's attachment to Lady Ashleigh."

His wife sighed ; and Captain Hamilton continued :

“ I must own I was a little startled, when I heard the name and station of my friend's love. I was prepared for a declaration of a different kind—some hapless Kate or Emily ; and perhaps—do not blush Charlotte—a child to be befriended. But the case was widely different : it was no humble abode I was to seek, but the most splendid ; no repentant, blushing, humbled, poverty-stricken female, but one decked in jewels, surrounded by luxury, followed by the world, courted by the great, supposed the gayest of the gay, the most happy and blessed of her sex. It was some months before I returned to England : when I did, Elliot's death had long been known to Lady Ashleigh ; but the sight of me, and the object of

my visit, put to flight all the fortitude with which she had armed herself, to gloss over her feelings to the world's and her husband's eyes; and the torrents of tears she shed, too truly told how, by one human being, poor Elliot had been valued. In the course of my visit, which was a very long one, she told me she was to have married him, but a prudent fit came over her father, who was his uncle and protector, on the discovery of the extravagance of his eldest son — the sum destined to make them an income, was disposed of for payment of Lord Epsom's play-debts, the marriage broken off, Elliot himself hurried to sea, and she into the arms of Lord Ashleigh. Such was the tale she imparted to me, mingled with the tenderest expressions towards him that was gone, and the most bitter ones towards him to whom

she was united. She seemed, however, to have possessed one solace, even from the moment of her marriage—an animated correspondence with her cousin. He desired me to take charge of, and examine all his papers, and to restore all Lady Ashleigh's letters: they amounted, considering all things, to no inconsiderable number; and from the glance I had of their contents, for they were mixed up with various other papers, added to the feelings I witnessed in both parties, I was in some measure better reconciled to poor Elliot's early fate. Had he returned to England, I fear it would only have been to sacrifice his honour, and that of the daughter of his benefactor, at the shrine of love;—the grave, in mercy, saved him that shame. Lady Ashleigh I never saw again: and whether the lapse of time has subdued her feelings

I know not. I have heard of her as much admired, and apparently a happy woman : I could almost hope, for her sake, that the incense of the world has done what virtue or reason could not do—driven Elliot from her mind.”

After various observations from his wife and sister, when Captain Hamilton ceased, Charlotte said, that, with such knowledge of the Ashleigh family, she was surprised he took so little interest in hearing them talked of. “I am very different,” she added ; “and shall encourage the dullest of our dull neighbours, when they make Lady Ashleigh their topic.”

“You are a woman, Charlotte,” said her husband, laughing, “and all women (do not kill me) dearly love to talk of their neighbours. I have so high an opinion of the taste of the sex, that not unfrequently I have endeavoured

to walk in their steps, and have made efforts to feel interest for Mrs. Such-a-one's carriage, and Mrs. So-and-so's dinner-party: but to listen to idle details which I know to be nonsense; to hear of love between two people, who, had events taken another turn, would probably now be divorced, and be told of a wretched woman's prosperity, whom I once saw with a breaking heart beneath all her pride and pomp; and to be wearied with their hospitality and attention to their guests, who are essential to their existence, as keeping them from ever being *tête-à-tête*, the object of both to avoid—to such discourse I cannot bend to grant the compliment of a smile, unless it be one of unfeigned contempt.”

Without this previous history, it would have been difficult to explain two visiting-cards, bearing the Countess

of Ashleigh's name, which greeted the eyes of the Hamilton family the day after the foregoing conversation, on their return from their morning drive : there was also a card of the Earl's for Captain Hamilton.

The visit had this annoyance—it had to be returned ; and though they were not let in, still, for half a day, it put the Hamiltons out of their customary routine of life, which, to people perfectly happy in themselves and in their own quiet pursuits, is a distress. A greater was, however, in store for them. A few days after the visit, a card was left—"The Earl and Countess of Ashleigh's compliments," &c. &c. &c., in short, — Mr., Mrs., and Miss Hamilton were invited to dinner on a particular day named. This card did not probably meet with as cordial a reception as most of a similar nature were in the habit of

producing. All agreed that they would rather not have been asked ; but, however, some difference of feeling existed among them afterwards. Geraldine decided that she would not go ; her brother as resolutely determined upon accepting the invitation for all ; and his wife's mind balanced to and fro in a complete state of uncertainty : she had some desire to see, and become acquainted with Lady Ashleigh, and she always leaned towards her husband's opinions ; but, then, a party of strangers—the cold supercilious glances of an assembly presuming to look down upon her as a stranger uninitiated in a certain set ! and then another source of distress—dress ; the fear of being either too smart, or not smart enough, or having no gown just to hit the happy medium. These distresses were enough to make her more urgent not to go than she

otherwise would have been upon any point which opposed her husband's wishes ; but he had been too much accustomed to command on board of ship, not to be able to govern in his own house, and, spite of tears in his sister's eyes, and a gentle sigh from his wife, a card was written in due form accepting the Earl and Countess of Ashleigh's invitation.

Captain Hamilton had his own reasons for wishing Geraldine to go : his desire with regard to her was, to see her well married ; he felt that it was the only chance for her future happiness, and the only measure, indeed, which could drive Stuart from her mind. A husband, home, and family of her own, would open an entirely new scene, bring forth new feelings, banish the old, and give her a station in the world.

Arthur had no particular person in

view, and, living in their present society, could have none ; but at Ashleigh Park the case would be different : there those might see her whose admiration might influence the whole of her after-life. That she would be admired, he was assured ; for, though he had not much mingled with the first circles, yet their standard of beauty must be very high or very peculiar if Geraldine Hamilton could not claim their suffrages in her favour. With this hope he attended, more than he should have done, to a discussion upon dress, in which his wife took a very active part, his sister being entirely passive.

“ And what are *you* going to wear ? ” inquired Arthur of Geraldine.

“ Anything,” answered his sister, starting from a reverie — “ I have not thought about it.”

“ Then, my dear,” said Mrs. Hamil-

ton, laughing, "my words for the last half hour have been entirely thrown away!"

"Was it my dress you were speaking of? That is not worth a thought; yours I should be delighted to hear about. You are a bride; people will look at you: I am only an old maid—my dress can be of no consequence."

"I believe, Geraldine, you speak to be contradicted," rejoined Captain Hamilton. "Your dress is of quite as much consequence as Charlotte's, perhaps more so, as you are the tallest and therefore the more likely to be distinguished—and as to calling yourself an old maid, they are a race I abhor, so never again assume that title." Seeing his sister look distressed, he added in a more gentle tone, "I intend those pretty eyes of yours should do a great deal of

execution yet; so be a good girl, and don't disappoint me."

Geraldine tried to smile, and asked playfully, if it was upon the chaplain or tutor at Lord Ashleigh's that he wished her to open the battery of her charms?

Arthur laughed, and pressing her hand told her to look in the glass, and when she saw how well smiles became her, she need not despair of making a conquest of the family physician himself.

In a small wood adjoining Ashleigh Park, Geraldine often spent many pleasing though solitary hours; and after the above conversation, to the wood as usual she bent her steps, her brother and his wife having mounted their horses for a ride. As was customary, herself and the pheasants seemed to have undisputed possession, and, seated for half an hour

beneath a widely spreading beech, she had remained musing on them, on herself, on something or nothing, till the train of her thoughts was recalled to one settled subject, by the report of a gun close to her, which brought down lifeless to the ground, within a few paces of where she sat, one of her companions in the shape of a magnificent pheasant. Then ensued voices not rough and unceremonious, but in laughter and merriment, the one evidently a female's, and the other not unknown but well remembered, that of Sir Francis Clairville's! The speakers soon appeared; Sir Francis one, the other a handsome young woman, showily but tastefully dressed.

“So the poor bird is really dead!” said the lady.

“Most assuredly,” answered Clairville, “and I hope you are not going to

be sentimental on the subject, or my happiness will in great part be destroyed; for at this moment I am elated beyond measure to have displayed my skill in your presence, to have demonstrated what females so rarely judge of by their own eyes, what a good shot is: that talent which is so envied, sought after, and prized, and which if a man possess, he may be dull, vulgar, sordid, contemptible, and yet be reckoned a very good fellow, received in all societies, liked by men, and—”

“Hated by women,” interrupted his companion.

“Not at all; when a man is liked by his own sex, the other follow blindfold. All home-bred youths, much more suitable companions for them, women invariably despise, because they lack school-fellows to uphold them in the world—

———‘ Seldom swain
Of such soft mould is loved again.’

The same reasoning leads them to like good shots, hard riders, gamblers, and even hard drinkers—”

A violent fit of laughter from the lady obliged Sir Francis to pause.

“No more, I beg; though, to be sure, you have in some degree solved a mystery which has been to me long inexplicable, why men do lead the uncomfortable life they do, slaughtering pretty birds in dripping woods, chilled by cold, breaking their limbs in pursuit of an animal they very often do not see, and have no pleasure in obtaining, and ruining their fortunes and health by play or wine, when all rational beings are fast asleep in their warm beds; but now the reason is evident, it is to gain the approving smiles of our all-conquering sex, that men devote themselves to

so much wretchedness—to a life of martyrdom. Justly has the poet observed, “Love rules the grove,” and its sway is proclaimed in the shape of gamekeepers and man-traps. Oh, what a delicious thing is love! without it, the vineyards would be uncultivated, the horses unbroken, the pointers starving—”

“And a woman’s tongue unemployed,” interrupted Clairville, “for it is the best topic she possesses to talk about, almost the only one after dress. In mercy, spare your wit; you have more than all your sex put together, and sufficient beauty to raise a war like Helen’s of old; but I am a poor foolish mortal, and crave your pity for having killed this bird. I must carry it home.”

“No, no! I protest against a dead companion,—the living are bad enough.”

“Am I to take that compliment to myself?”

“ As you please.”

“ Then spite of all my hopes, all my toils, I still have no reward but scorn ; I still,” and Clairville looked hard at his companion, as if to read in her countenance the contradiction to his words—
“ I still am to consider that you regard me as insufferable.”

“ If I thought you insufferable, I should not have asked you to walk with me, or invited you to my house.”

“ Such attentions are very compatible with thinking a person very odious. You might in your walks want some one to open the gates ; and, as a guest, I might be useful in assisting to carve, or to make a fourth at whist. As a single man, I might have merit in talking with the young ladies, or as a shooting man in providing game for the table ; for these and similar qualifications the most disagreeable are en-

dured, and I dare not flatter myself that my deserts can command greater favour, or be ranked above mediocrity."

"Your mock humility is charming,—delightful. I wish it was not getting late, and I would listen to such falsehoods for an hour; but as it is, I must go home."

"Alas, and why? I should like to dwell in this wood for ever,

' Here to live and here to die,
And that my tomb should be a bush,
Where harmless Robin dwells with simple thrush.'"

"Am I awake, or do I dream!" exclaimed the lady affecting surprise. "Are you in reality Sir Francis Clairville, or some one else in his form? The Sir Francis at home is a vain, fair-spoken, languid, cunning sort of a sighing gentleman; the Sir Francis that wanders in the wood, is satirical, free-spoken,

and amusing; only a turn too humble and romantic. Ha! ha!"

Sir Francis seemed hardly to know how to take this speech; for a moment he coloured violently; there was a malicious glance in the corner of his fair friend's eye which startled him.

"So, you imagine my character to be an artificial one! Pray tell me whose is not? Certainly not any being's who lives in the world and does not desire to be either a cipher or a dupe. You are not always natural yourself. I have seen you admire what you hate, neglect and speak coldly of that which in your heart you prefer."

"This is an accusation indeed!" said the lady haughtily; "but it is without proof. There are circumstances in which it would be folly to be perfectly sincere; but still I hope that such ob-

vious necessity does not lay one under the charge of hypocrisy. I hate a hypocrite."

Again Clairville blushed. "If you do, why do you allow the world to imagine two things, first, that you are a very happy woman; secondly, that you are attached to your husband?"

"It is no fault of mine, if the world is so foolish as to imagine either the one or the other. I never make love to my Lord in public, and as to being happy, why, according to the standard of the world's judgment, I am happy. I have fine clothes, fine jewels, fine carriages, and see fine company. It is the blindness of the world, not deception on my part, which makes them consider me happy, because I possess advantages which to many constitute the supreme good."

“ Seriously, could you be happy without that good ; or perhaps I had better say *goods* ?” inquired Clairville.

“ Seriously, I have no time to answer a serious question. I once had a dream of love in a cottage ; but I do not think now of such things : and yet money I despise ; the generality of society is disagreeable to me ; and as to my own home, I dare not say what I think of it.”

“ Whatever you find it yourself,” said Clairville, in his softest voice, and with his most feeling manner,—“ whatever it may be to you, you should derive pleasure from the knowledge of what your powers can render it to others ; and whilst you spread a charm over all within your sphere, whether husband, friend or servant, which all must feel, though they do not comprehend, your home should be more valued by you,

who, unworthy as I am to express such an opinion, derive your chief good and pleasure from seeing others happy."

Sir Francis paused; the lady sighed, and was silent. She walked on a few paces, and their voices ceased to be audible. Geraldine saw, however, the arm of the gentleman proffered and accepted by his companion; shortly after, the heavy shutting of a gate proclaimed they had quitted the wood, and that she was again alone; her thoughts, however, were sufficient company. The strange conversation she had just heard; the unexpected and unwished-for appearance of a man she had hoped never to meet again, and from whom she was only indebted to the friendly branches of the tree, under which she sat, for concealment; the beauty, unhappiness, yet heartless spirits of the lady; the insinuating voice and fluent tongue of

Clairville, glossing loose principles ; his hollow-heartedness, and yet his knowledge of human nature, which, spite of all his own most contradictory feelings, enabled him to comprehend those of his companion, who, evidently born for better things, was driven to confide in a man she half despised, and probably secretly mistrusted, and who encouraged her confidence, as a line to draw her into those toils, which, whatever their rank, name, or character, he laid for all of her sex, who had beauty enough to arouse him to the trouble of undermining their virtue—all this was pondered over by Geraldine ; and many a sigh did she give to the fair being she had just seen, who if still pure, (and there was that of honesty in her countenance which seemed to say she was,) yet, with such feelings, and such a friend, how long was such purity to endure, without sufficient prin-

ciple and conduct, or domestic bliss, to guard her mind from contamination? Of such safeguards she must have been destitute, or she would never have held the conversation she had done with Clairville, nor have exposed herself to its possibility, by engaging in a *tête-à-tête* walk with such as he. These thoughts so fully occupied Geraldine, that it was not till she returned home, that the unpleasantness of having Clairville in the neighbourhood occurred to her ; and most devoutly did she hope, that neither he nor his companion would ever choose the same spot as herself again to take the air.

For very obvious reasons, Geraldine was not necessitated to mention her adventure in the wood ; it must have introduced the name of Stuart, and that name was never mentioned in her intercourse with her brother.

CHAPTER V.

AT length, the day for the dinner at Ashleigh Park arrived, and at the most happy moment, neither late nor early, the Hamilton family were ushered through an elegant suite of apartments into that in which the Earl and the chief part of his guests were assembled. He made many apologies for the Countess not being ready to receive Mrs. Hamilton ; she had come in late from her walk ! He then placed the ladies on the sofa, after a general introduction to all present, and carried off Captain Hamilton into the recess of a window to talk politics, or rather to express his own

opinions ; for those of others, Lord Ashleigh neither expected or desired to hear. There was no form at Ashleigh more than was necessary ;—when dinner was announced, Lord Ashleigh conducted the lady of highest rank, the rest followed in pairs, as taste or accident prevailed. Mrs. Hamilton fell to the lot of a dandy cousin of the Earl's, who was very happy to make acquaintance with a new and pretty face, in the dull routine of a country life. Geraldine discovered a red ribbon peeping from beneath the coat of her conductor into the dining-room, which, added to a formal and studied air, as if the world was indeed the stage, to which, whether justly or not, it has frequently been compared, made her judge that she leaned on the important arm of a diplomatist. She was right, and under such guidance was placed on the second chair from the top

of the table, the diplomatist sinking himself into the intervening seat. Geraldine declining soup, had leisure to examine the company more fully than was possible in a half-lighted drawing-room; and amidst the wearers of blue and black coats, and of every coloured gown under the sun, who sat in pretty regular succession down the sides of the table, not one face met her eye that she had ever seen before. The circumstance was satisfactory; but there was an empty chair besides the one awaiting the lady of the house; and a fearful surmise as to who might arrive to fill it, was unhappily confirmed by seeing Sir Francis Clairville glide therein, with an apologetic glance of excuse towards the Earl, accompanied by the information that he had been walking out till a late hour in the afternoon! A few moments brought another arrival of much more

importance, and in the Countess of Ashleigh, Geraldine beheld, with more sorrow than surprise, the incognita of the wood.

Lady Ashleigh, in returning the salutation of those of the company whom she had not as yet seen, most particularly distinguished the Hamiltons; and with rather more agitation than she wished her voice to betray, expressed her pleasure at renewing her acquaintance with Captain Hamilton, and making that of his lady and sister.

“I hope Miss Hamilton,” she said, addressing Geraldine, who was nearest her, “I hope you find Hampshire as agreeable as Ireland; we pique ourselves, as you do, on our balmy air and fertile soil.”

Geraldine's feelings were too well tutored as to the claims society might have upon them, to hesitate in her reply; and

spite of a doubting glance from her brother, not the best method of strengthening her nerves, she replied calmly,—
“That the beauties of Hampshire were far superior to any she had ever witnessed in Ireland.”

“Then the Emerald Isle is not so much the object of your enthusiasm, as it is to many of your countrymen; you will grant poor England some little merit?”

“My tastes were entirely formed in England; it was there all my early years were spent. The enthusiastic admirers of Ireland, I imagine, know little of any other place; otherwise, their judgments might be different, and their enthusiasm or prejudice somewhat less.”

Lady Ashleigh now addressed herself to Clairville, but his wits were for once estranged; he was lost in contemplation of *Mrs. Mortimer*. Her voice had

aroused his attention, and he immediately inquired of his neighbour her name.

“Miss Hamilton, sister to the gentleman in black at the bottom of the table,” was the reply.

This explanation conveyed no information to Clairville, and he began to think, spite of the attractive performances of the Earl's cook, how it was possible Mrs. Mortimer and Miss Hamilton could be one and the same person: but no study was of any avail; a Mrs. anybody might be identified with Mrs. Mortimer, but Geraldine, unmarried, protected by her brother and his wife, neither poor nor obscure, was apparently so at variance with the situation he had known Mrs. Mortimer in, as to make the two being one and the same person almost impossible. Still he gazed and examined, and though with no wish to renew his ac-

quaintance, yet his malice could not be well satisfied without a trial of her fallibility. This could only be done through the medium of Colonel Stuart's name; and most eagerly did he lay in wait for the happy moment when, by a dextrous application of the test, Geraldine would be identified with the adventuress, Mrs. Mortimer. The trial was made, and failed: whether Geraldine was prepared, from her knowledge of Sir Francis's character, to expect a latent attack, or that she was perfectly aware the event alluded to was false, it matters little to explain; perhaps both had something to do with it; but her colour never varied when Sir Francis Clairville volunteered the information, to a gentleman on the other side of the table, of a report which one of his letters of the morning had contained, that the —— regiment, commanded by Colonel Stuart, had been sur-

prised and cut to pieces by the French. The composure of her countenance completely baffled Clairville; he could not see that inwardly his malice, not Colonel Stuart's danger, for of that Geraldine was assured he was the sole inventor, sank deep, and added an additional weight to her already overcharged heart;—but, to outward appearance, all was calm, and Sir Francis began to think the likeness was not so strong, and that it was time to attend to the neglected dinner, and also to his equally neglected devoirs to the Countess, who, with a pouting lip and knit brow, sat awaiting some gallant innuendo from her *slave*, as she was pleased to call him, to compensate for the dullness of her two neighbours, a Baronet and the red ribbon before alluded to.

As the dessert was put on the table, a servant whispered the Earl, who

communicated the intelligence from the bottom to the top of the table to the Countess, informing her that Lord Cliftown was arrived. In the line through which his Lordship's words ascended, everybody seemed to think it right to make some remark on the subject, and a general murmur ensued, in which Lord Cliftown's name was distinctly heard from all around.

Mrs. Hamilton's dandy neighbour began to her, "Are not you glad Cliftown is come into the country?"

"Indeed I do not care, for I never saw him, or even heard of him before."

"Never saw Cliftown! he is the best fellow in the world."

"And so rich!" muttered the mother of two plain girls present.

"And so handsome!" uttered one of the plain young ladies.

“And so nonsense!” roared the father; “he has no more beauty than your old governess.”

“La ! Papa.”

“Is not Lord Cliftown very agreeable?” inquired the sister of the last speaker of Sir Francis, by whom she was seated.

“I dare say he is.”

“Do not you know him, then?”

“Whom?”

“Heavens, Sir Francis, how absent you are ! Lord Cliftown we are talking of. I asked you if he was not very agreeable ?”

“Oh, most unquestionably he is the pleasantest creature breathing ; I never knew a rich bachelor Lord who was not so.”

The unfortunate querist blushed, and Clairville turned to Lady Ashleigh for

the approving smile which he knew there awaited him. The smile was obtained.

“ Well, I am glad he is come; we terribly want London news,” she observed.

The red ribbon by Geraldine’s side now began to open his lips, in the way of articulation.

“ The last Lord Cliftown’s death was sudden, I believe.”

“ An illness of six months terminated his existence,” answered Lady Ashleigh, drily.

“ Six hours more likely,” replied the red ribbon, with an affronted air.

“ Very possibly,” said Lady Ashleigh, too wearied by her taciturn neighbour to be polite; “ six minutes, if you like.”

“ I only like, madam, what is the fact; perhaps,” turning to Geraldine,

“you may know how long the illness of the last Lord, uncle to the present Lord, and—”

“Son to the Lord before,” interrupted Clairville.

“Sir, what do you mean?”

“Mean!—to save you the trouble of explaining, what no man of talent can explain, a point in genealogy.”

“It was not genealogy, it was—” burst forth the red ribbon.

“A glass of wine, Lady Ashleigh—Ashleigh, send the sherry here, you quite forget your lady’s taste,” said Sir Francis, not attending: “pray, Lady Ashleigh, let me fill your glass, I am sure you require it after *our* long walk.”

The red ribbon groaned; Lady Ashleigh coloured, she knew best why; Clairville smiled.

In the drawing-room Lady Ashleigh particularly addressed herself to Mrs. and

Miss Hamilton; and though her topics were merely walking and riding, and such of the neighbours as she discovered they were acquainted with, yet still her manner made them interesting, and even agreeable; and it was with regret that Geraldine beheld the entrance of the gentlemen, which gave another turn to Lady Ashleigh's ideas, and produced, consequently, a change in her place. She moved her chair some paces away from her female guests, so as to open the space around her for the other sex: Mrs. Hamilton was called away by her husband to look at a picture; and Geraldine remained alone, though not very far removed from Lady Ashleigh, who had already got Sir Francis by her side, with whom she commenced a whispering conversation. Geraldine took up a newspaper, with the contents of which she tried to busy herself, and not to

listen a second time to her hostess's discourse. She had read some time, when the low tone of Lady Ashleigh's voice was changed, she spoke distinctly, and the answer was not Sir Francis's voice, but one far more familiar to Geraldine's ear. She turned eagerly round: Clairville had resigned his chair to a person whom she heard addressed as Lord Cliftown; but the voice, the air, the manner, were all Captain Morton's; and one moment more, by giving her a full view of his face, showed clearly it was he. Geraldine's feelings it would be vain to describe; she was most painfully agitated; and whilst she dreaded Lord Cliftown, (for so he evidently was become,) immediately discovering her, and increasing her disorder, she yet was equally alarmed for fear of missing this perhaps solitary opportunity of renewing her acquaintance. She trembled,

but became more composed, as the conversation between Lady Ashleigh and Lord Cliftown continued, and sufficiently prepared herself for that moment which sooner or later must occur, when his attention would be drawn towards her. She had just reasoned herself into the very proper belief that, from difference of circumstances, his behaviour might now be as cold as formerly it was friendly, and even that he might not acknowledge her at all, when all doubt was removed, by finding her hand grasped within Lord Cliftown's, hearing his words of delight at meeting her, and seeing proofs of the same in his smiling eye and laughing mouth. However discreet a different conduct might be, Geraldine was in no humour to be anything but natural; and the consequent pleasure she expressed at meeting Lord Cliftown secured him by her for the

remainder of the evening, though the deserted fair was the Countess of Ashleigh.

“There is a tide in the affairs of men.” Of all the unobserved, neglected beings who ever sat at a table of sixteen people, none probably had ever been of less consequence than Geraldine. After dinner her fate seemed to increase in gloom : she was in a perfect state of solitude, which, happily for herself, was no misfortune. She had no wish to talk to indifferent people ; but as of this circumstance the indifferent people were not aware, in neglecting her, overlooking her beauty, not inquiring into her powers of conversation, they showed that the standard of inferiority at which she was placed, was somewhat lower than that of the lowest class of the society, so that noticing her was degrading themselves. Mrs. Hamilton was different ; she was a bride,

a gallant officer's wife, her father had been heard of ; but an unmarried sister, for want of a home, living with her brother, and attending his wife, is precisely nobody.

So thought the world at Ashleigh Park, till Lord Cliftown's attentions gave a new aspect to the state of affairs : even the well-bred Lady Ashleigh could not conceal a face of surprise : Clairville was surprised also, but had better command of his features. There were many things to make Lord Cliftown a person of importance ; he was the latest arrival—he came from London—and it was his first appearance as a man of fortune and title. Now, however, Geraldine, as the exclusive object of his attention, was associated in his glory : little did he think, however, that he was paying the arrears of the whole company. Not so Geraldine ; she

knew what she had been—she knew what she was — she felt the attraction Lord Cliftown's attention drew towards her from the rest of the world ; but it was a mere passing thought. She had too much to think of besides to attend to any one but him : she had to answer all his questions, of how she was—where she had been—what she had done since they met ; and she had to listen, which was far more agreeable, to his own little details, comprising an engagement at sea, and the history of his fortune and title on land. Then came Colonel Stuart's name — that name now never heard—and she was told of the present and past as related to him. What food for after-meditation did not all these details give ! It was on Lord Cliftown's arm that Geraldine quitted the drawing-room at Ashleigh Park—it was he who placed the shawl on her shoulders,

assisted her to the carriage, and even lingered on the steps to see her drive away.

It was not without some hesitation that Geraldine explained to her brother the origin of her intimacy with Lord Cliftown ; but, thanks to that *esprit de corps* which exists in no profession more strongly than the Navy, Captain Hamilton had no comments to make but what were highly satisfactory to his sister. He had always heard Morton spoken of as a very fine fellow ; he was very happy she had introduced him, as he had always wished to make his acquaintance. All was, therefore, as it should be, and Geraldine retired to rest with the satisfaction arising from pleasing ideas of the past : her brother's pleasure was more dependent on the future. In the retirement of their own apartment he eagerly demanded of his

wife if she did not think Lord Cliftown deeply enamoured of Geraldine. Mrs. Hamilton was not less inclined than the generality of her sex and age to enter into matrimonial speculations : of Lord Cliftown's love she was as willing to believe as her husband ; but with regard to Geraldine's feelings, they differed — Mrs. Hamilton truly judging that, as the friend of Stuart, Geraldine had been so pleased to meet Lord Cliftown ; whilst Captain Hamilton as warmly affirmed, that for himself alone had her satisfaction arisen. Sleep closed the argument.

Beneath Sir Francis Clairville's refined exterior, some low qualities dwelt : one was curiosity, which, being awakened by Lord Cliftown's attention to Geraldine, he determined, if possible, to satisfy by a little conversation with his Lordship, and therefore sauntered

towards the ante-room, for the purpose of meeting him on his return from taking Miss Hamilton to the carriage. He commenced his attack by laughing at Lord Cliftown's gallantry in going out in so cold a night, taking particular care to imagine that it could only have been excited by admiration of Mrs. Hamilton. Lord Cliftown, the most ingenuous of men, answered, with the utmost simplicity, that he did not find the night cold, and that it was Miss Hamilton whom he had conducted to the carriage.

“ Miss Hamilton ! my good fellow, what could possess you ? Unmarried women are ciphers in society, unless they happen to be mere girls just launched ; but when they become in the eye of the law spinsters, they become nothing in the eye of mankind, and must eat their dinner, drink their

wine, get on their horse, and into their carriage, without presuming to aspire to any other attendance than that of menials. I am so glad to have been able to give you this hint ! so, pray, profit by it, and the next time you meet Miss Hamilton, cut her dead !—it is our way on shore, which you ought not to remain ignorant of.”

Cliftown was a man of quick feelings, and though eminently good-natured, yet of an impatient temper : he could hardly understand Sir Francis’s speech, but he was more quick in his comprehension of the manner being satirical and bordering on the impertinent, and he had a notion that Miss Hamilton was purposely spoken slightly of. He reddened, and answered fiercely—

“ Your opinions can be no law for me ; your rules of conduct, whether those of landmen generally, or not,

shall not influence my behaviour to my friend, be that friend as little formed to excite admiration, attention, and respect, as Miss Hamilton is the contrary. Who, that sees her, dares say an unmarried woman is nothing in society?"

"Oh! if you choose to give her dignity, the case is different."

"I!" continued Lord Cliftown: "Miss Hamilton needs no artificial aids; she requires no support from others; she may give, but she cannot receive honour."

"My good fellow, you are very far gone indeed! Would not the title of Lady Cliftown be a very pretty addition to Miss Hamilton's dignity and honour?"

The subtle Clairville had hit upon a very tender chord, more tender than he was aware of. Lord Cliftown turned

white, and a half sigh escaped him. Clairville quickly followed up the attack.

“Miss Hamilton is singularly like a Mrs. Mortimer I once met with.”

“She is not in the least like Mrs. Mortimer,” answered Cliftown in something approaching extreme anger.

“I am of a very different opinion,” continued Clairville, “and see a very strong resemblance. I hope it is only in outward form, for Mrs. Mortimer was a lady of somewhat questionable character, as your acquaintance with her has probably informed you.”

Prudence for once prevailed, and checked the wrathful words, though not the wrathful glances of Lord Cliftown. “You may say what you please of Mrs. Mortimer, but of Miss Hamilton’s purity——”

“There *can* be no question,” inter-

rupted Clairville, with a cunning smile ;
“ her resembling *a* Mrs. Mortimer in person, and I must say in beauty, attaches no likeness to her conduct, nor, consequently, blame.”

“ I am glad that is your meaning ; I did not precisely understand you. I do not comprehend the labyrinth into which all fashionable discourse leads ; I am a rough seaman, who will not have a friend, male or female, spoken of slightly, or with a doubtful meaning, unmoved. I am *not* acquainted with any Mrs. Mortimer of equivocal character, nor will I allow, in my presence, Miss Hamilton to be compared, even in looks, to such ; who, as fair in fame as form, demands the admiration of the world as much for her conduct as beauty.”

Lord Cliftown ceased, not quite certain that he might not have done better, had he held his tongue : in which opinion

he was more confirmed by Sir Francis saying with much solemnity :

“ I bow to your Lordship’s superior knowledge of Miss Hamilton’s virtue, as well as beauty ; and if ever again she crosses my mind, it shall be as that faultless monster whom the world ne’er saw :” then turning his step towards the drawing-room, humming an opera air, and reflecting in his own mind what an egregious act of folly it would be in Lord Cliftown, with his title, fortune, and figure, to sacrifice his liberty by marrying Geraldine, when he might aspire to any connexion, fortune, or face in the kingdom. Lord Cliftown’s thoughts were very different ; whatever they were, however, for the present he checked their course, and for the remainder of the evening tried to attend only to the game of whist in which Lord Ashleigh engaged him.

Sir Francis Clairville rightly judged when he imagined Lord Cliftown desired to marry Geraldine;—but beyond the mere wish, he could have little conception of the feelings which occupied his mind.

As soon as a late breakfast, the next morning, had been properly loitered over, Lord Cliftown walked forth in the direction he had ascertained Grove Cottage to be situated: his mind uncertain as to paying or not paying a visit; and if he did, how to conduct himself. The first point was more quickly decided than he expected, for he fell in with Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton riding out, and learned from them that Geraldine was at home. To resist continuing his walk to call upon her, would have been impossible;—but as to the second point, the line of conduct to be adopted when with her,—if

he should raise the friend to the lover was to be decided by circumstances.

Spite of the charms of "Waverley," which Geraldine was perusing, she was enabled to give Lord Cliftown a very cordial reception, which the brightness of his eyes, and friendship of his manner, seemed to demand, and might have wrung from a more indifferent acquaintance. He was delighted to have met her the day before — pleased to see her looking so well — charmed by Captain Hamilton and his pretty wife ; and all was expressed without waiting for an answer, and without allowing Geraldine to withdraw her hand. At length, however, he relinquished his hold, and drawing a chair close to her, prepared to listen as well as talk. Lord Cliftown could not be more ready to hear than Geraldine was

to explain some circumstances which had occurred since they met. She therefore, as concisely as possible, related to Lord Cliftown that which she was most desirous he should be informed of,—the entire cessation of all correspondence between her and Colonel Stuart, at which price she had been restored to her brother, her name and home. — Though unfortunate circumstances had often obliged Geraldine to dissemble, her nature was most inartificial. She attempted no concealment, though no parade of the feelings which her brother's authoritative affection had severely wounded; and though she talked of Stuart as of one no longer in existence, yet it was with a faltering tongue and tearful eyes. Still she blamed not her brother; he acted according to his own sense of right; to have shown her greater indulgence would

have been to depart from the character of uprightness, honour, and plain-dealing, for which he was renowned—and, but in that one respect, he was most affectionate, attentive, and generous.

Lord Cliftown mused when Geraldine concluded; he then rose and took two or three quarter-deck turns up and down the room, muttering, “Poor Stuart! Perhaps Hamilton is right—that confounded wife!” And then he looked at Geraldine, as handsome as ever, even more interesting; and his own independent situation rushing to his mind, he could hardly contain his satisfaction upon thinking that he had it now in his power to try and gain those affections which, as far as Stuart was concerned, need no longer be respected; which would, if he attained his object, render him the happiest of men, place Geraldine above the sneers of such as

Clairville, above even the bounty of her brother, and in a situation where her talents and virtues might shine forth as the sun, instead of withering in obscurity. Lord Cliftown at length resumed his seat by Geraldine.

“ I am afraid,” she said, smiling, “ you think I possess somewhat of a discontented spirit, and I tremble for fear a vein of querulousness may have crept into my tale : if so, I hope God will forgive me for my ingratitude in not fully appreciating the blessings of my present lot compared to those of days that are gone ; and I hope you will excuse me also. I believe I should grumble less were my duties more enlarged : when I had their little girls to teach, and Mr. and Mrs. Douglas to please, my spirits were better, though I was then without a brother or a name ; my discontent has increased with my

prosperity, and if any other good fortune should fall to my lot, I suppose I shall be the most insufferable mortal in the creation. Confess that your present silence arises from a little feeling of contempt for one so difficult to please, who has all her life poisoned her joys and increased her sorrows by a repining spirit."

"Miss Hamilton," answered Lord Cliftown, "if my silence and thoughts were explained to you, you would find them very different from what you suppose."

"I am delighted to hear you say so, for I should be very sorry you should despise me ; but there is a little doubtful air about you which I do not quite understand — tell me, I beg, you do not hate me."

"Good God ! Miss Hamilton, hate you !"

“ I do not mean to say but that you know me too well to think very highly of me ; but then I wish, in my particular instance, that my merits should not be considered only my misfortunes.”

Lord Cliftown drew a book towards him, and began to examine its contents, turning leaf after leaf, as if in search of a particular passage. Geraldine drew her work towards her, to await the conclusion of the visit, little dreaming of what was passing in Lord Cliftown's mind—it was soon to be declared. The book was thrown aside with something of impatience. Geraldine raised her eyes rather surprised : Lord Cliftown was regarding her attentively, with cheeks more flushed than when he entered the room.

“ Assuredly you are not well,” said Geraldine ; “ the room is too hot,” and she rose and put a screen before the fire—

Lord Cliftown watching her, but not speaking.

“I wish,” he said, at length, “I was gifted with Clairville’s fluency of speech, then I should be at no loss to express the feelings of my heart, and, Miss Hamilton you would not cut me to the soul by talking of contempt or hatred. Reverse the terms, and then you will better understand my sentiments : for contempt read admiration ; for hatred, love. Answer me sincerely—dare I hope that it will ever be in my power to render you that happiness which you have never known, and which, had Stuart been free, he would have offered you, and which, when first you knew him, seemed to be the prospect opening to view ? To equal Stuart, I do not pretend in all respects that excite love and admiration—but he never can be yours, and

your brother even denies you his friendship. I have no tie to bind me ; free as the air I breathe, with wealth more than I coveted for myself ; a name which to give to the woman I loved, would be the greatest pleasure it could afford me : all these are yours — my love you had from the first moment I saw you. Say, Geraldine, will you be mine—the wife of a man who adores you !—answer me, I implore !”

Surprise and regret rendered Geraldine speechless. Lord Cliftown her lover ! wanting to make her his wife ! proposing marriage to her ! was astonishment to one who so little counted upon her own attractions and his friendship, as to have been as much surprised as pleased at the warmth of their meeting the evening before, but who never dreamed such warmth had proceeded from any stronger cause than mere good-

nature and friendship;—but with the astonishment and distress was mingled much of gratitude for so disinterested an attachment, desirous to raise her to a situation which so many younger, and happier, and greater than herself might covet. With all these feelings, however, was one far more to be defined than the rest, more clear, more decided—she loved him not; kind as he had been to her, excellent as was his character, splendid as was his station, he was not the man she loved, or ever could love. In broken accents, much of her mind was disclosed, much remained unknown, or misunderstood; and whilst Geraldine repeatedly said she could not marry him—that her affections were not her own to bestow, still Cliftown heard her say, “that she was not worthy of him; that a younger, fairer, happier woman, should be his bride;” and she expressed

so much gratitude for his affection, that, for a rejected man, Lord Cliftown had less cause to despair, and more to hope, than is usually the case; at least, so he thought himself. But rejection he would not call it—he was an indifferent wooer; he would improve under her tuition—he had been precipitate; though she refused his love, she must not spurn his friendship, and then time would bring their feelings more in unison. Geraldine secretly hoped it would, by reducing his to the level of her own. Much conversation ensued, which Geraldine in vain tried to turn upon ordinary topics. Lord Cliftown, having once burst through the restraint they had long been under, was no longer in a humour to have any of his feelings unsaid; and Geraldine was compelled to listen, sometimes with smiles, and sometimes with tears, to praises which, from

any other person but one so honest, natural, and unsophisticated, would have sounded like egregious flattery. Geraldine had very little personal vanity; but the voice of affection is always pleasing, and the voice of love, unless from a hateful mouth, few women can hear unmoved, though they may not possess the actual responding chord within their own bosoms. Geraldine did therefore “a patient ear incline;” and Lord Cliftown, with such negative encouragement, departed in a frame of mind resulting from a more cheerful than intelligent spirit, and regained his quarters at Ashleigh, with the firm resolve to persevere and not despair.

It caused a little disappointment to Lord Cliftown, that on his next visit to Grove-cottage, Geraldine did not appear; for, seeing him ride up to the door, she had hastily escaped in an opposite

direction, and, equally to her brother's and to Lord Cliftown's annoyance, was not to be found when summoned to the drawing-room. Geraldine had been perfectly silent to her brother, as to what had taken place with regard to Lord Cliftown, well assured, that not only his reason, but perhaps authority, would be brought in aid of his addresses. By similar expedients, Geraldine hoped to avoid any further interview with Lord Cliftown before they left the country, and they were speedily to join Mr. and Mrs. Douglas in a house they had taken in London. She was mistaken in her calculation, however, and Captain Hamilton engaged himself, wife, and sister, to spend the last three days at Ashleigh Park. Geraldine had no voice in the arrangement, and had only to obey; actually, therefore, at the very moment she would have been thankful for the

certainty of never seeing Lord Cliftown again, she found herself domesticated under the same roof with him, and though such proximity could only last three days, yet, situated as they were, it seemed an eternity of time.

CHAPTER VI.

IT is a truth generally received, that, to witness English society in perfection, it should be seen in the country. If he has not visited a nobleman at his country-seat, a traveller is generally told he has seen nothing of England ; and so he believes, unless he tries the experiment, when, perhaps, like all other general rules, he finds it admits of exceptions ; and perhaps also he may find the exceptions of a rather more glaring nature than the blind eyes of popularity allow. Too many ingredients are required : even though the house be comfortable, the cook good, the fires bright, the

beds soft — and these things do not always bear too rigid a scrutiny—then the intellectual feast fails, and, like Noah's ark, an heterogeneous assembly find themselves shaken together, with no bond of union but the walls and their host and hostess.

When Lady Ashleigh married, she brought with her a vivid remembrance of the charms of her father's mansion in Cheshire : there the beauties of nature were enlarged, and the pleasure of exercise improved, by the presence of the witty, wise, and gay ; and when the song, the dance, and the laugh, all tempered by elegance, closed the day, and sent her to her couch to dream again of the lightsome glee in which the day had been spent,—then, visions of Henry Elliot, her first love, arose ; with him she seemed again to urge her steed over beautiful pastures, or wander in the

sheltered woods, or feel the pressure of his hand in the dance.

To live in the country, and receive her friends, was therefore by no means the most alarming of Lady Ashleigh's matrimonial prospects ; but even in this she was doomed to disappointment. To her father, a man of taste, of talents, of letters, as far as a man of the world could be, society was not so essential but that he had leisure to be fastidious in his choice, and to be less indebted to numbers than quality in his selection : his friends visited him for himself, more than for his exquisite cook, game-preserves, and fox-hounds, though the said cook, game, and hounds were no despicable addition to the pleasures of the society often assembled at the Duke of Avon's princely residence. Lord Ashleigh and the Duke of

Avon were very different persons, and notwithstanding the magnanimous resolve Lady Ashleigh formed, that her house should be very agreeable, though Lord Ashleigh was the master and Henry Elliot no longer her lover, yet a very little time opened her eyes to the melancholy truth of its being not only difficult, but impossible. Her own friends she might have, but the majority must be ever her lord's choosing; and as his lordship's object in filling his house was to gain a character for hospitality, and ever to secure listeners to a store of old family stories handed down from father to son with the rent-roll, and of all of which he was the undisputed master and endless retailer, the chief of the Ashleigh Park company were little calculated to do particular honour to any society. Lady

Ashleigh, after a short but abortive effort, relinquished the attempt to make Ashleigh Park the abode of the Graces and the Muses ; and, beyond a feeling of gratitude to her guests for saving her lord and herself from the horrors of a *tête-à-tête*, she gave herself very little trouble about the generality of her guests, and indeed, at times, treated them with so little ceremony, that had they not been very dull, and her lord most particularly so, it would have been impossible for them to be blind to her coldness, and for him not to resent it. She had one or two allies of her own : Sir Francis Clairville, for instance, and the Hamiltons, whom she had particularly invited, partly from feeling for her first love, partly as a set off against an annual visitation, as she termed it, of the Nought family, who came regularly to bestow three weeks of their company on their relatives at Ash-

leigh Park. This family consisted of the Marquis of Dreadnought, the Marchioness of Dreadnought, the Earl of Nought, and his brother, Lord John Nought; with two young ladies, Lady Mary and Lady Louisa Nought. Their names very well demonstrated their characters; their persons, however, were anything but nought, for they were all large, heavy-looking people. The Marquis did nothing but smile, an error the Marchioness was never guilty of; the daughters followed their mother's system, only converted the absence of smiles into the presence of scowls. Lord Nought was the worst of the family, adding pomposity to dullness: Lord John aspired to be a dandy—he was reckoned a wit by his father, a beauty by his mother and sisters, and a fool by all the world besides. Such was the family with which the Hamiltons

were to figure in relief. In addition to the Noughts were many and various characters, some friends of the Earl, others of the Countess: Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove had a voice from each side of the house, the Earl inviting them as country neighbours, the Countess as good company, particularly the lady.

Mr. and Mrs. Musgrove had, some ten years back, married for love, and for nothing else, for they were poor; their friends objected, and for three whole years, with the prospect of as many more years in addition, they lived and throve upon love, and were happy and content. A relation died in India; it was matter at first more of surprise than actual enjoyment, when Mr. Musgrove found himself his heir, and a man of wealth. He began at length to understand and appreciate his good fortune; so did his lady: and

it was then that love took flight, offended at his rival wealth, and was never after mentioned or missed by the prosperous pair. They hurried into that sea of smoke which is so well descried from the summit of Highgate-hill ; and there they bought, and talked, and looked, and thought, not of each other, but of every other thing the smoke contained.

For a short time, Mr. Musgrove had a decided advantage over his wife in their separate pursuits : he had lived in London before, had many acquaintance, was a member of White's ; whilst she was a mere novice, had all to learn, was unknowing and unknown. For a moment, a little moment, she regretted the obscurity she had lost, and with it the attentions of her husband ; more particularly when she saw him in the morning parading the streets with hosts

of friends, and every evening had him carried from her society by invitations abroad, in which she was not included. Mrs. Musgrove was not, however, a woman to despair; she was pretty, smart, and clever: at a ball given at — House, she appeared, and was seen; being seen, she was admired; and her conversation proving her wit equal to her beauty, she was, in a moment, the fashion; and, by the end of the season, Mr. Musgrove thought he had heard quite enough of the pearl he possessed, and of the glory of being the lord and master of the most charming woman in London. “The rage will pass,” thought Mr. Musgrove, with something of a groan; but the rage did not pass; and though the judicious world left off considering Mr. Musgrove as a partner in his wife’s success, they did not at all leave off considering her as

a model of beauty, taste, and wit. At the moment of her meeting the Hamiltons at Ashleigh Park, she was at the pinnacle of her glory, and the greatest flirt going. Mr. Musgrove looked like a gentleman, spoke like a gentleman, but his wife fairly eclipsed him; so that, in her presence, his part was wholly and entirely subordinate. He had his consolation in the society which clubs afforded:—there female influence is banished; the lords of the creation may there exercise their lordly dominion, without the gaudy insects who, everywhere else, are trying to gain possession of the country—at clubs, therefore, he could play his rubber, cut his joke, and assert his opinion in peace; may such resorts long exist for the benefit of such as Mr. Musgrove! One annual visit he felt himself obliged to make to his country-seat in Hampshire,

for business on his part, repose on that of his lady, which business and repose they were both equally ready to resign, when Lord or Lady Ashleigh wanted their company at the Park. Between Lady Ashleigh and Mrs. Musgrove a bond of alliance existed; they lived in the same society, had many mutual friends, were both the fashion, handsome, and fond of the world. Mrs. Musgrove, however, loved it for its own sake; Lady Ashleigh, because she had nothing else to love. In two respects they were very different, which difference, however, did not militate against their friendship—their beauty was of a different character, and their manners in the world perfectly different. Lady Ashleigh's figure was tall and commanding, her features regular, and their expression somewhat pensive, whilst her

large dark eyes betrayed her feelings more than did her words. Though not insensible to admiration, she had too much pride, or, properly, self-respect, to seek it—her admirers were all self-elected, and very often but indifferently received. Clairville seemed, however, to have a more favourable reception; his society was evidently agreeable; and what was more, his admiration, spite of his well-known character, was viewed by Lady Ashleigh without apparent mistrust.

Mrs. Musgrove was short, her figure light and airy; her beautiful teeth were ever displayed in smiles, in which expression her eyes, bright and sparkling, joined; rouge, perhaps, assisted her complexion, but, be this as it may, the *tout ensemble* was good. Flirting was the object, pleasure, and business

of her life ; to gain the attentions she required, she would assume any character, any form, or take any trouble.

“ To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.”

Her present object was Colonel Lennox, one of the party at Ashleigh Park. This was a young man of noble birth and noble exterior, small fortune, expensive habits, and great fashion : his resolve had long been to sacrifice some day at the shrine of wealth by marriage ; but *en attendant* a period which he daily put off, and daily found more requisite, he was the cicisbeo of any lady of decided fashion, who chose to take the trouble of making advances to him. Mrs. Musgrove having, therefore, laid the train, he fell instantly into the most spirited flirtation possible : in the full tide of which affair the Hamiltons

reached Ashleigh Park, and were to be either scandalized or amused as their inclination led them. The Hamiltons were not people, however, to trouble themselves about the affairs of their neighbours, and would hardly have noticed the mutual attentions of Colonel Lennox and Mrs. Musgrove, but for the astonishment of a country squire, his wife and daughter—Lord Ashleigh's guests of course—who had eyes to see, ears to hear, and tongues to tell, and were in a perpetual state of irritation and astonishment at Mr. Musgrove's blindness, Lord and Lady Ashleigh's indifference, the Colonel and Mrs. Musgrove's impudence, and the little discouragement they met with from any of the party. One day the father of the family seriously informed Mrs. Hamilton that, if a convenient opportunity should occur, he should think it his

duty as a magistrate, a family man, a good subject, and one of the society for the suppression of vice, to inform Mr. Musgrove of the necessity of admonishing his wife upon her conduct. The feelings of this family it was not difficult to penetrate, and the pleasure of surprising them gave additional zest to Mrs. Musgrove's flirtation. Lady Ashleigh, who hated all those she called indigenious, viewed with infinite delight an opportunity of Ashleigh becoming odious to them, without her being the offending party; so secretly gave all her encouragement to her friend's desire to astonish the weak minds of the natives. The scheme succeeded to admiration; and when the family left Ashleigh, it was with the full conviction of one and all being subpoenaed to give evidence of the levity of

Mrs. Musgrove's conduct, in a court of justice. The father actually drew up an extremely voluminous statement, which might have equally been considered a moral essay, to be delivered upon the important occasion of Musgrove *versus* Lennox. It was just finished, and, after many revisions, and much applause from his wife and six daughters, the delighted author panted only for its public display, when, in the Morning Post, appeared the following paragraph.

“ MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.

“ By special licence, on Thursday evening last, at the residence of the bride's mother, in Cumberland Place, the Honourable Colonel Lennox, youngest son of the late Lord Hazleford, to the beautiful and accomplished Miss

Morland, only daughter and heiress of the late Ralph Morland, Esq. of Blaze Castle, in the County of Denbigh, and of Morlands in Gloucestershire. After the ceremony the happy pair left London, for the beautiful villa of Lady Jane Morland, the lovely bride's mother, at Twickenham, there to spend the honey-moon !”

Two other persons of the society at Ashleigh Park remain to be described.

When Captain Hamilton visited Ashleigh, he anticipated much pleasure in meeting Mr. Wickham, the lawyer, politician, and wit ; the admiration equally of the senate, bar, and drawing-room. He met him, and was introduced ; the ladies admired the keen glance of his eye, and Hamilton prepared to admire the flowers of his speech. His prepa-

rations were useless : Mr. Wickham said nothing, nor did he talk at dinner, nor after dinner, nor at tea, nor at breakfast: the fact was, Mr. Wickham was reposing; he came to the country for no other purpose. Lady Ashleigh he had known from a child; he was the friend of her father: she was glad to see him; she did not want him to be witty, but happy. As to Lord Ashleigh, he was too well pleased at having it announced in the paper, “that the celebrated Mr. Wickham was on a visit at the Earl of Ashleigh’s princely and hospitable mansion, &c.” to care in the least if such celebrity was the better or worse for a domestic guest; his being there was all he required: which Mr. Wickham so well understood, that but for some occasional remark addressed to Lady Ashleigh, he might have passed, as far

as silence went, for a Monk of the order of La Trappe. If, however, he did speak, it was in too low a tone for any one beyond the person addressed to understand: as if to banish all hope of a general display of his powers, which, by the ever ready smile and eager attention of Lady Ashleigh, the remainder of the company were left to imagine. Even to Mrs. Musgrove, Mr. Wickham was an object of attention; with such game in hand as Colonel Lennox she could not help firing a shot towards the political hero: the shot fell harmless; Mrs. Musgrove hoped for better success another time.

The other person to be described was Lady Emily Horton. Lady Emily was the near relation and greatest friend of Lady Ashleigh. When they were girls, opinions were divided as to their charms; the majority, however, were

inclined to consider Lady Emily as the most beautiful, and, according to the tone of the world, as likely to form the best marriage: they were mistaken; Lady Emily's fate proved very different. At nineteen she accompanied her mother, then supposed in the last stage of a decline, to Devonshire. The disorder abated, but was not cured. Ten years did the devoted Lady Emily give up her time, her bloom, her spirits, health, and every friend, to cheer the sick couch of her mother. In the happiness of fulfilling her duty she was rewarded, and, as long as her parent lived, contented; but it was not till her mother was gone, and she again returned to the world, that all she had lost for her sake was made known to her. Her place in society was gone; strangers stood around her,—she was forgotten. For a moment she thought the world changed, but was at

length obliged to confess that the change was in herself, and that whatever might have been her expectations at nineteen, at twenty-nine she could only depend upon herself. She was a woman of a strong mind, strengthened by retirement, books, and the society of an intelligent companion ; but it required some fortitude to bear the knowledge that her career was closed, and that, little as she expected from the world, and much as had been once offered her by the world, nothing was now to be obtained, nothing could be asked from it, and that she and the world had parted to meet no more.

Her fortune, though not large, was comfortable ; the house her mother died in was her own : thither she again retired, and thence made occasional excursions to visit some relations and friends, and received more rarely their visits in

return. The early friendship of the cousins, Lady Emily and Lady Ashleigh, had not waxed colder by years and absence ; the most unbounded confidence existed between them ; and if any thing could have reconciled Lady Emily to her very different lot, it would have been the many marriage cares Lady Ashleigh's heart betrayed, her melancholy language, a mind dissatisfied with itself, her principles ever warring against her actions, and whether to good or evil, happiness or misery,—feeling, feeling alone being her destroyer or friend. With such a heart open to her, Lady Emily would turn to her better regulated mind with satisfaction ; and in her own confined abode, with no companion but a book, cast no envious glances to those mansions of splendour and greatness, wherein at one moment, it seemed, her inevitable lot must be cast, when her fate

appeared next to decided as the wife of a man of rank and wealth.

Such was the society into which Geraldine found herself thrown ; and judging from the neglect she had experienced in her former visit at Ashleigh Park, no one could be better prepared to act a subordinate part, inferior as were the principal ones, than herself. She was, however, mistaken, and soon discovered that as a visitor to stay, she was entitled to much more consideration than as a dinner-visitor. Hands were now offered to her where before she did not obtain eyes ; and excepting from the Nought family, all was cordiality and good breeding. Mrs. Musgrove particularly distinguished herself : her manners were what is termed popular, and she never neglected woman or man without sufficient reason, such as their being quizzes in dress and manner, or their being vulgar, that is,

ignorant of the *ton de la bonne compagnie*: bores, even, she tolerated, if handsome, well-bred, or of high rank: unblemished reputation in either sex was no particular passport to her favour, nor did the reverse exclude them from her intimacy.

Something of unison of character drew Lady Emily Horton and Geraldine together; but the warmth, the friendship, attention, enthusiasm, were all left for Lord Cliftown, and, next to falling at her feet and worshipping her, his admiration could not have been more decided. Happily, however, his opportunities were not so numerous as might be expected. In a large suite of rooms, however convenient and built for society, greater solitude may be often found than within the walls of a smaller mansion, built only for the purpose of existence and shelter; and Geraldine

very often contrived to escape Lord Cliftown by such devices as the extent of the apartments favoured. Whilst he sought her in the library, she had flown to the music-room ; by the time he reached the latter, she had vanished to the billiard-room, and so on ; so that the evening probably was half-spent before the chase concluded, and Lord Cliftown well established by her side :—then indeed he was immoveable. He had, however, too just a sense of his late precipitation, to which alone he attributed his failure, to hazard so soon again a repetition of his proposals ; and such being the case, it was impossible for Geraldine to regret attentions, which, however to the eyes of the world expressive of admiration, and in themselves proofs thereof, were unsupported by words. Charlotte and Captain Hamilton, not aware of the state of the case,

were in ecstasies of delight at the promised union, and his wife now began to make as sure of it as her husband. She, however, made a friendly stipulation, with regard to Geraldine, with her husband—that matters were to take their course, and that neither in joke or earnest was the subject to be named to her. Very far was Geraldine from thinking of fulfilling their desires; very little did Lord Cliftown occupy her mind: she thought much more of the secret glances between Sir Francis Clairville and Lady Ashleigh, and of the pensive but handsome features of Lady Emily Horton. At times, however, Captain Hamilton was not mistaken when he thought Geraldine listened with satisfaction, if not interest, to Lord Cliftown's words, and that at such times she cast a timid look around, fearful of being overheard. This had something

of a love-making air. Mrs. Hamilton thought the same; but still they were in error. Lord Cliftown, with less policy than good-nature, and more from necessity than either, was often constrained to make Stuart the subject of their discourse: the effect was instantaneous; and when sea-fights, or the morning's engagement against the birds, or even compliments were unheeded, that magic name would ever recall Geraldine's truant thoughts, and her admirer had all her undivided interest and attention. To be sure, the compliment, even in Lord Cliftown's eyes, was somewhat equivocal; but still he derived some satisfaction from being attended to at all. The pleasure of the Hamiltons was more unalloyed; ignorant of the attraction a name produced, they thought it existed in his Lordship's conversational powers alone.

A loss may sometimes be a gain, as the departure of the Nought family proved to all but Lord Ashleigh; his ideas of society being confined to quantity, not quality, he deeply lamented the defalcation of six at dinner, and six who filled the places of sixteen as to room, though their minds were of a more circumscribed character; every one else, however, rejoiced. Mrs. Musgrove sprang in the air with delight as she viewed the coach, chaise, and barouche, containing the family, drive from the door. Colonel Lennox had several anecdotes of the folly of the brothers, which he had only awaited their departure to relate, to which anecdotes he had most eager listeners and applauders in Lady Ashleigh and Mrs. Musgrove. Mr. Musgrove himself cut some jokes on the Marquis's play at whist.

Wickham, having given his quota of dislike by a sneer and a shrug as they left the room, said no more ; but the pungency of abuse lay with Clairville to administer. Affecting to defend the party, he praised the dignity of the Marquis, the wisdom of the Marchioness, the air and dress of the young ladies, and the proper manners of the young men. A quiet country neighbour, a guest of Lord Ashleigh's, who was dumb from astonishment at the former remarks of the company, cheered up as Clairville proceeded, and, with a satisfaction which produced a general smile in all but Clairville, complimented him upon his candour, and on the similarity of their opinions.

“ I quite agree with you, Sir. The Dreadnoughts may not be brilliant, but they have solid good qualities far more valuable, and much more rare as the

world goes ; there are few situations the Marquis would not fill respectably—and one cannot say that of every one.”

“The similarity of our opinions is evident,” said Sir Francis, looking towards the ground ; “the solidity of his lordship we are evidently both perfectly aware of ; for my part, so highly do I estimate him, that I am surprised he has never been called upon as a prop to the administration.”

“Lord, Sir ! well, I never thought of that ; the Marquis is no fool, but it requires a deal of cleverness to be a minister.”

“Oh, dear, no !” replied Clairville, “witness A. B. and C.—all idiots in looks, acts, and words.”

“Very true, Sir, very true. It may be so. Now what places do you think Lord Dreadnought could fill ?”

“What think you of Governor-Ge-

neral of India, or Lord Lieutenant of Ireland ?”

“ Why not precisely, not precisely, those places are a little too lofty ; something less exalted, my good Sir.”

“ Less exalted ! why you would not have him fill a subordinate place !—Clerk of the Kitchen, we will say—but that would never do, for I fear knowledge of accounts is highly necessary, if not something of gastronomy.”

The Squire looked aghast :—“ Clerk of the Kitchen !”

Clairville continued : “ To be sure, the office of State Coachman, as they only sit upon the box, and are not meant to drive, he might sustain with credit, if it were not for that eternal smile, which would spoil the whole dignity of the scene. It is a thousand pities the country should be thus deprived of his services. Perhaps he may mend of that

happy countenance and obtain the place, otherwise I fear we shall never see his name in this precious volume," laying his hand on the Red Book—"never see him in office."

The general smile which followed this speech silenced the man of the soil, who, lifting up his hands and eyes in astonishment, said no more. Clairville pursued the topic no further, but sauntering to the piano forte, struck a few notes of a favourite air of Lady Ashleigh's: the desired effect followed, Lady Ashleigh joined him, and in music the Dreadnoughts were soon forgotten.

Lord Cliftown's zeal betrayed Geraldine's musical powers, and, after some entreaty, she was prevailed upon to take a part in a trio with Lady Ashleigh and Clairville. It was not without some alarm and many bitter remembrances that she again heard her voice mingled

with Clairville's in song ; and it was not until nearly the conclusion of the performance that she had sufficient command of her feelings to give tolerable effect to her powers ; then, however, the sweetness and science she possessed drew general attention and admiration : even Mr. Wickham threw away his newspaper to listen, and honoured her performance so far by muttering to himself, as the various inquiries were made of " Whom did you learn of ?"—" Where were you taught ?"—" Have you practised a good deal ?"—" What taste your instructor must have had !"—

*" Non vi s'impara ; che quei dolci lumi
S'acquistan per ventura, e non per arte."*

The visit was at length over, and the Hamiltons departed for London. Geraldine had been, on the whole, rather pleased. Lord Cliftown's attentions had

not led to a second proposal, and she therefore began to hope that they might never reach that awful climax ; they had certainly given her consequence in the eyes of the rest of the company, and silenced Clairville's tongue, if not thoughts, as to her resemblance to Mrs. Mortimer. With Lady Ashleigh she could not but be interested, and with Mrs. Musgrove amused ; and that her interest and amusement were not greater, arose from the discovery, even in the soft Lady Ashleigh, but much more in her friend, of some dark shades of that heartlessness which the world's votaries too frequently exhibit, and almost always possess. Geraldine was confirmed in these her opinions, by a conversation on military affairs—as not unnatural to the time of day—but which was discussed in a perfectly novel and very trying manner to her high mind and candid spirit.

Mr. Wickham was engaged with the paper, from which he read a paragraph purporting to be news from Spain. Mr. Wickham was an opposer of Government, adverse to the war from principle, a lawyer, financier, and with much embryo ambition of place and power as a statesman ; Geraldine was, therefore, nowise astonished, knowing it to be the custom of the party with whom he was united in political bonds, to see him, when he had concluded the article, which was rather complimentary than otherwise to the Government, throw the paper aside with a peevish expression of disbelief ; but to hear Lady Ashleigh's soft voice echo his words did excite her surprise and rouse her attention. Sir Francis Clairville followed her remark by drawing a line on the table, as if to denote the position of the armies, by which just pic-

ture he gravely pronounced the destruction of the British forces as inevitable. Geraldine shuddered. Mrs. Musgrove mentioned, with great *sang-froid*, a report of a whole detachment having been cut to pieces. Clairville said it was quite possible, and that during his visit to the army, he had seen enough of their rash daring, even in the commander himself, to make any catastrophe probable. "My daily wonder was, we were not surprised and carried prisoners into France," he continued: "we were nearly surrounded, and almost at their mercy, as I was credibly informed."

Geraldine smiled—a shrewd suspicion passing her mind that the gullibility of the St. James's-street amateur had probably been put to a high trial by the wits of the army as to the danger of their position, and that Stuart had taken a part in such exaggerations to intimi-

date his friend, did not render Clairville's picture the less amusing.

"It is not the Frenchman's game to destroy us yet," said Wickham gloomily.

"I really think," said Mrs. Musgrove, "if I were a soldier, I should do my best to be taken prisoner, for I am dying to see France, and know not how it is ever to be managed. I told my brother my opinion in my last letter."

"Where is your brother?" inquired Lady Ashleigh.

"The last letter was dated Lisbon; he was there to order up stores and clothing for the army as quickly as possible against the winter; and I am sure, by John's account, they were in a miserable condition. He described himself—you remember how smart he used to be—as having only one coat, which

had been turned three times, of which, so strangely is he metamorphosed, he rather spoke with triumph."

"Poor fellow!" said Lady Ashleigh.

"Poor fellow indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Musgrove: "what business had we to mix ourselves up in a Spanish quarrel, and to be starved and beat for a stupid King, who will never thank us for our pains? If the French came here, I should be as willing to fight as any one; I would defend my own hearth-stone to the last drop of my blood!"

"Ay, the pavement of St. James's-street, I grant you," said Clairville, laughing.

"Some day," observed Mr. Wickham with solemnity, "we may see the truth of your words proved: the first leisure moment we shall become the prey to Napoleon's ambition; he will find us

but a paltry conquest:—a poor, dishonoured, scanty, and starving population will add little to his triumphs.”

A short pause ensued, which was broken by Lady Ashleigh making the remark, that her father, though opposed to Government generally, yet thought our national honour too far embarked in the war to make retreat possible.

“Then, probably,” said Clairville sneeringly, “our troops will shew us the way.”

“Nay,” replied Mrs. Musgrove with affected candour, produced by hearing Colonel Lennox’s voice in the anteroom, whose opinion of the conversation she had doubts about,—“nay, Sir Francis, you are too severe ; no one ever accused our soldiers of deficiency of spirit.”

“In the pursuit of women, I grant you, they are forward enough,” said Clairville, who had also heard the same

voice. Mrs. Musgrove blushed. Wickham again spoke, and with the air of an oracle pronounced,

“ Our troops are brave, they want not physical strength, but in their mental energies they are deficient ; their self-sufficient commander is little equal to cope with the tried veterans of Napoleon’s school. The enemy is popular and powerful, ourselves hated and despised ; the French, not inferior to us in the field, are greatly our superiors in the cabinet. The Spaniards, as lukewarm friends, are worse than open enemies, and when our purses are drained, and our population destroyed, will desert us to our fate, leaving us as an example to future ages of the fatal effects of officiousness.”

Colonel Lennox entered. No schoolmaster’s unexpected appearance amongst his pupils, when plotting some treason

against his authority, ever produced a more general silence. Though Colonel Lennox was far too much a man of the world to be professional, and appeared to take much more interest in the results of a race than of a battle, and was named far oftener the winner of the Derby than the first general of the age, yet as he was a military man, had served with credit, and intended to serve again, he might so far have thrown aside the apathy of a fine gentleman, as to have listened with surprise, perhaps anger, to the opinions just offered, and have been aroused even to attempting to lift out of the dust and mire into which his friends had just trampled them, a few leaves of those laurels our troops had gained by the price of their blood. Of course Geraldine's feelings were very different from those who have just declared theirs; but they were too acute

for utterance, even if the opportunity had been more favourable for her to express her sentiments.

Let those who think this conversation an exaggeration, turn back their thoughts a few years. The battle of Waterloo put an end to all cavil on the subject of our military prowess, and silenced, if not the thoughts, at least the words, of those who, secure from personal danger themselves, thundered out their anti-warlike sentiments in drawing-rooms, dining-rooms, boudoirs, and in every congregated meeting, however humble or however great, and in which number might be included the prejudiced, the ignorant, disappointed, heartless, and selfish. And very able representatives did these component parts find in Wickham, Lady Ashleigh, Mrs. Musgrove, her husband, and Sir Francis Clairville.

CHAPTER VII.

WITHOUT living very much in society, the variety of objects which London afforded, proved beneficial to Geraldine's spirits. Mr. and Mrs. Douglas received her with renewed kindness, and with them and their youngest girls she had companions, independent of her brother and his wife. One additional source of pleasure Geraldine had, though in the negative form of absence from pain: notwithstanding his declared intentions of following her immediately to London, Lord Cliftown allowed one month to pass away without making his appearance; and as his name fre-

quently appeared in the newspapers as one of a society established in Leicestershire for hunting, she trusted that some fair Diana would soon eclipse her in his Lordship's heart, and ride herself into that favour which was in the present instance most unworthily bestowed; and which she would most willingly resign, too happy to do so before Lord Cliftown's addresses came to her brother's knowledge. If ever they did, she was well convinced that, neither her prayers or tears, nor reason or affection on his part, would induce him not to countenance and support them to the utmost extent of his power; and, as many unhappy wives could tell, the influence of relations (I do not speak of parental authority) is often more overbearing and irresistible, than the prayers and sighs of love itself; and what would not be granted to passionate vehemence, how-

ever flattering, is yielded to cold, eternal, heartless debate, from mere weariness of spirit, and disgust for all around.

“God made the country, and man made the town.”

Beautiful as the line is, and universally believed as admired, its claim to truth, like many other trite quotations, admits of question. For if by that we acknowledge that the hand of God is only to be seen in the productions of nature, most assuredly we are mistaken ; because to a philosophic and truly Christian mind, his power may be viewed in crowded cities as well as in silent groves, and heard in the hum of men as well as in that of birds and bees ; and in walking the streets with an eye that feeling gives, the wonders of art may be traced to the Almighty Giver, who in his bounty has bestowed such power on man. Painting and music are chiefly

to be appreciated in cities. While Geraldine feasted her eyes on the beauties of a gallery of paintings, and regaled her ears with the charms of music, in which the perfections of every style and every clime were equally displayed in both arts, was she less grateful, less of a Christian, than in the retirement of Newtown Hamilton? Far, far otherwise.

In gazing from the window on the moon, shining over thousands and thousands of sleeping multitudes, not only was Geraldine's heart lighter, but better, than when she had gazed on the self-same planet lighting the desolate region of Newtown Hamilton, where the smiling and peopled heaven was sadly contrasted with the forlorn and dreary earth it reflected upon; and the wonders therein contained, made the insignificance and insipidity of her existence below, more apparent. At such

times, Geraldine would close her window and retire to her pillow, accompanied by thoughts far more in complaint than praise; and with no feeling of thankfulness, but that one more miserable day was concluded. Such a frame of mind is not the one to resist temptation; so the event proved: but such a state of mind existed no longer; and under the roof of Mr. Douglas, though that roof was in London, she sunk to rest at peace with her God, herself, and the world, and could gaze on the wonders of the heavens without sadness and distress that so fair a sky should cover so uncongenial a scene below.

Geraldine had accompanied Mr. Douglas one morning to a sale of pictures. Their curiosity being satisfied, they were leaving the room, when the appearance

of an amateur friend of Mr. Douglas changed their design, and with his new companion he began a fresh examination of the compositions before them. Geraldine, however, begged to rest during their absence, and accordingly placed herself in a vacant chair to await their leisure. Next to her was seated a lady, rather richly dressed than otherwise ; her face was plain, but it was not so much an assemblage of ordinary features, as a peculiarly vacant expression which overspread them, that excited Geraldine's attention : the lady herself did not look towards her neighbour, but was busily occupied in pulling off and on her gloves, with an intensity of interest, as if her whole powers of body and mind were in the occupation. About ten minutes elapsed, when suddenly Geraldine's arm was rather roughly seized by her neighbour, who exclaimed,

“ Let us go home ! I am so hungry — Georgiana is so long looking at those horrid pictures ! ”

Geraldine, surprised, turned around ; and her companion at the same moment lifting up her eyes from her glove, which she was still examining, uttered a scream of astonishment, “ Mamma ! mamma ! where is mamma ? Pray, pray tell me ? Is she gone home ? Has she left me behind ? ” and the unfortunate lady’s eyes filled with tears, which rolled down her colourless cheeks. Pitying her distress, from whatever cause arising, Geraldine attempted consolation, but the stranger’s tears only fell the more ; all she could learn was, that her mother a little time before had been sitting in the chair Geraldine now occupied, and that she had not observed her move from it.

“ She is probably not very far distant, ” said Geraldine, looking towards an el-

derly lady, well-dressed for her years, and with a decided air of dignity in her appearance, who was deeply engaged in examining a Vandyke portrait, one that Geraldine herself had been before attracted by, from the likeness it bore to Colonel Stuart.

“Is not your friend that lady in the velvet pelisse?”

“Oh, it is! it is!” exclaimed the afflicted daughter, “it is mamma!”

“Shall I conduct you to her? You had better join her.”

“No, I will not leave my chair, else some one may take it from me as you took mamma’s.”

This answer, uttered with the pettishness of a weak mind, induced Geraldine to rise and approach the lady, begging her to come to her daughter, whose tears and lamentations had already attracted more notice than was agreeable. The

lady blushed deeply at the condition of mind her unfortunate daughter had betrayed, and flew instantly to her. Her presence was a complete restorative; and Lady Mary Stuart, *for it was she*, now laughed and talked with as much glee at seeing her mother, as she had before shown despair at losing her.

“Now let us go home,” she exclaimed.

“My love, there is Georgiana to join us,—and,” turning to Geraldine, “I have to thank you, Madam, for your kindness to my poor child; her health,” and the colour again flew to Lady Lawnley’s cheeks, “is not strong, and her nature so extremely nervous that she cannot bear to be left a moment. I had merely moved away for a few minutes to examine that picture, (pointing to the Vandyke portrait) which reminded me of a near and dear relative, — (it was now Geraldine’s turn to blush,)—

when my daughter missed me ; and, but for your kindness and good-breeding, she might have been far more unpleasantly situated than has proved the case. Perhaps you will allow me to ask to whom I am obliged. I am Lady Lawnley."

Geraldine paused a moment, and somewhat hesitatingly announced her name as Hamilton. The name brought no association of ideas to Lady Lawnley ; but her embarrassment she could not but observe. She regarded her with surprise, but having her daughter's impatience to calm, she made no further comment, and shortly afterwards, Georgiana joined them. She was not alone ; her companion was Colonel Vavasour, who was instantly despatched by Lady Lawnley for the carriage ; on his return, his eyes fell upon Geraldine.

“ Gracious Heaven ! Miss Hamilton ! ”

Geraldine bowed distantly. Lady Lawnley and Miss Stuart looked surprised. The Countess of Lawnley’s carriage was announced, and the irritable Lady Mary sprang up, seeming inclined to run out of the room at the intelligence. Lady Lawnley caught her arm, and turning to Geraldine, asked if she could be of any use to her in taking her home : a civility which was declined with many thanks, as Mr. Douglas, whom she was with, had his carriage in waiting below. Lady Lawnley then took leave, having previously secured her daughter under her arm. Vavasour placed Georgiana under his, and the party vanished.

“ These, then, are the persons of whom I have thought so much ; that unfortunate, is she who stands between

me and happiness, who has poisoned that of the noblest being the world ever possessed;" thought Geraldine, as her eyes followed them out of the room. Her regards were still on the door by which they had departed, when Colonel Vavasour reappeared. Geraldine hoped that he would shun her; not at all; quickly ascertaining that she was where he had left her, he was by her side in a moment. Vavasour was not Geraldine's lover, and the warmth of Lord Cliftown was somewhat wanting to reassure the trembling Geraldine. Still he was friendly, gentleman-like, and perfectly at his ease: which was more than could be said of her he addressed, who with all her own misadventures in her mind, trembled for fear any allusion should be made thereto. Happily, however, Vavasour had no such intention; for, besides that his

nature was too calm for him ever to wish to ruffle that of others, he in this case had no opportunity. Excepting a short and animated interview with Colonel Stuart, on his arrival at Dublin from Newtown Hamilton, he had never thought or heard of Geraldine Hamilton, till this accidental meeting: the death of his father had obliged him to quit the army, and had sundered him at the same time, from his friend: he was now a Baronet with five thousand a year, leading a tranquil, happy, and inglorious life. When Geraldine hesitatingly announced that her father's death had left her to the protection of her brother, she had reposed all the confidence in Sir John Vavasour, that he could possibly wish to be burthened with; and quite as much to interest him as all the marvels of her elopement and supposed death could have done.

Colonel Stuart's name he did not mention, and having expressed his pleasure at finding her looking so well, and asked permission to call upon her, he took his leave, and Geraldine was again left to her own meditations. Mr. Douglas soon joined her, and they returned home; Mr. Douglas's mind occupied with the inanimate objects they had quitted, Geraldine's with those who could boast the pre-eminence of existing beings, though one, alas! was but a faulty specimen of fair Nature's works!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE acquaintance Geraldine had accidentally formed, was not destined to a mere ephemeral existence; in a few days the cards of the Countess of Lawnley, her daughter, and niece, were left at Mr. Douglas's door, and on returning the visit, Geraldine was admitted. In the course of conversation, Lady Lawnley observed,—

“I do not consider you, Miss Hamilton, in the light of a new acquaintance. When Sir John Vavasour told me you were of an Irish family, I was instantly reminded that my son, Colonel Stuart, was hospitably entertained by your fa-

ther, when in that country ; and that in his letters from thence, very frequent mention was made of yourself, in terms which make me very happy in the accident that has introduced us to each other."

Geraldine coloured, perhaps the more so from Miss Stuart's eyes being fixed on her face, eyes which indicated more than common observation. In Lady Lawnley's countenance, however, no trace of suspicion was observable ; and the quiet manner in which she passed on to some common speculations on the weather, showed how indifferent she was to the effect her communication could have upon Geraldine.

Sir John Vavasour was announced ; a daily and not otherwise than prolix visitor, as Geraldine had shortly reason to discover ; and had she wished so to do, to outstay him would have been im-

possible. On taking leave, Lady Lawnley and Miss Stuart warmly entreated her to repeat her visit, and the former named an early day for her dining with them,—an invitation which, whether wisely or unwisely, Geraldine readily accepted. Her brother looked grave at the engagement, but Mrs. Douglas, who had rather a weakness for people of rank, expressed so much pleasure that Geraldine should have formed such an acquaintance, that he could not venture to oppose the plan.

Lady Lawnley was exactly such as Colonel Stuart had often described her to Geraldine: with a quick feeling, and penetrating countenance, joined to formal and perhaps cold manners; manners which had not relaxed into any thing like modern ease, but which were in character with her stiff upright figure, with the gentle firmness of her conver-

sation, and the retired, even course of her life. What her countenance portrayed, she was ; she had good abilities and acuteness, and great warmth of heart.

Miss Stuart was a being to love and cherish, and most justly was she appreciated by Lady Lawnley, with whom she had lived since the death of Aunt Lucy ; but, alas ! no love or tenderness could bring back the young affections of her heart ; and, however unworthy, Halliday was still equally adored, as when he first breathed his love on the fertile banks of Clyde — a constancy which, Geraldine was not long in observing, sent many a bitter pang into the bosom of Sir John Vavasour, who sighed in vain as a willing but hopeless suitor for her favour. Georgiana's love was perhaps cherished by the life she led ; even in London their evenings were ge-

nerally spent at home, and though not solitary, yet no being, to be compared in personal attractions to Robert Halliday, ever there appeared. To these evenings Geraldine was always welcome, and in music, conversation, or sometimes reading aloud, many agreeable hours flowed tranquilly away; hours which soon began to have an additional value in Geraldine's eyes, as affording her a refuge from the assiduities of him who, from his first appearance in London, became almost domesticated in Cavendish Square—Lord Cliftown. His object was avowed, encouraged, commented upon; and Geraldine alone silent and dissatisfied. But it seemed as if the power of refusal was denied her; her poverty and dependance, her brother's authority, and his wife's affection, rose in fearful array against her wishes: she only begged for time, and though

every hour brought the decisive moment nearer, and no hour increased her willingness for the alliance, yet she began to feel it *must* be ; and with this feeling, came that heavy, unbending, sickness of heart,—a small portion of that terrible lot, which, though few have felt in its utmost force, yet few have been exempt from, in a mitigated form—*despair* !

To the world was shortly announced, and by the world was speedily promulgated, that Geraldine Hamilton was to marry Lord Cliftown ; and such was the fact. How the affair was settled, and her acceptance of Lord Cliftown not obtained, but taken for granted, Geraldine herself could not explain ; it was a dream from which she imagined she must awaken, a deception which, sooner or later, those around her must be undeceived in. She had given no encou-

agement, she had given no consent—yet Lord Cliftown was her destined husband ; arrangements for their establishment were begun ; and that the actual day was not fixed, was the only ray of hope which her prospects afforded her, the only prayer granted her. Lady Lawnley wrote a pretty note, accompanied by a wedding gift ; Miss Stuart expressed her delight, for Lord Cliftown was her brother's friend !

To please Geraldine seemed the object and end of Lord Cliftown's life ; and though far more than she felt, and far less than her brother thought he deserved, she received his attentions with quite sufficient pleasure to satisfy her lover.

The delicacy of such a character as Lord Cliftown's it would be impossible to vindicate ; and yet, to attribute to a coarse mind the pleasure of possessing

a woman, who at best he knew was indifferent to him, and who had, he could hardly have forgotten, but a short time back fervently loved another, would be to do him injustice : still, it is difficult to trace the intermediate shades which, by making Lord Cliftown not possess sufficient refinement to relinquish his love, so far removed him from the opposite extreme, as to give Geraldine a decided reason to relinquish him. Had Lord Cliftown sought Geraldine with a slight degree less humility, spite of her brother and poverty, she would have refused him ; and had it been in her power to scorn the friendship of her fellow-beings, and treat kindness with contempt, Lord Cliftown would have relinquished his hope. Lord Cliftown's powers of conversation were not transcendant ; he could talk, but his mind

was not sufficiently cultivated, nor his taste sufficiently good, to render the long *tête-à-tête*, lovers are doomed to by accommodating friends, otherwise than the extreme of dullness to Geraldine; and she had learned to look upon her piano-forte as deserving almost of canonization, as the means to get rid of many of those hours her lover chose to pass by her side; and though his musical intelligence was very bounded, yet the air of love-making was preserved, whilst Geraldine sang airs filling her mind with sweet and bitter thoughts of that land where they had chiefly been breathed—the banks of the Tagus.

With such a system of life, the possession of a horse could be no matter of indifference to Geraldine, and it soon became as valuable as the piano-forte, to get through the wearisome day. Walking is far too inconvenient a pro-

ceeding ; it leads to pensive contemplation, to mutual dependance, either for protection or amusement. Riding is very different ; the horses are part of the company, and a lucky start, or self-created caper, may cut short all discourse, however tender, for at least five minutes : to ride, therefore, became the business and pleasure of Geraldine's life, and into every road within a certain distance, and on to every common and heath, did she and her constant attendant penetrate.

It was the dusk of a spring evening ; Geraldine and her lover were returning from a long country ride, when a crowd in the street, attracted by a band of music, obliged Lord Cliftown to advance in front, begging Geraldine to keep near him. Her horse, however, chose for once to be disobedient to its mistress, and instead of following Lord

Cliftown's, as urged, started, snorted, and, growing alarmed at the assemblage of people, or the musicians, flew back upon the pavement. The foot-passengers had no pity for such an intruder, and set up such a scream of alarm, that the far more affrighted animal, not knowing which way to turn, reared up with no small violence. For a moment, Geraldine's fate seemed doubtful; the terrified spectators, and no less terrified rider, anticipated some formidable catastrophe; but it was the thought of a moment, the next was thankfulness for her escape. A gentleman rushed forward; seizing the horse by the rein, he forced him to the earth, and then continuing his attentions, led the trembling animal, and its equally nervous rider, from the crowd; whilst by his caresses he reassured the horse; when, in a low hurried voice, he inquired after its mis-

tress. The evening was dark ; throwing back her veil, Geraldine leaned forward to thank her protector ; his head was turned from her, he was arranging the curb-chain of her horse's bit. She spoke, he answered ; it was a deep low-toned voice : the figure of the man was tall and military, but thinner than she had known Stuart, even when they parted ; but the voice was not to be mistaken. Geraldine bent her head almost to his—it was Stuart ; their eyes met, their hands joined. The next moment Lord Cliftown was by her side, full of anxiety and alarm. Stuart vanished, but not before he had heard Lord Cliftown say in a voice expressive of the interest he felt,—

“ My dearest Geraldine, are you alarmed ? what has happened ? My love, let me lead you home.”

“ My love—dearest Geraldine !” muttered Stuart, as he observed from a distance his Lordship suit the action to the word, and conduct Geraldine towards the direction of their home.

CHAPTER IX.

Each day a new article of dress, displayed ostentatiously by her maid, as part of her bridal paraphernalia, or a present to add to the horde already bestowed by her lavish lover, proclaimed to Geraldine the near approach of that day which would close her life of quiet and melancholy, but not unsatisfactory, single blessedness ; and when joined to another, her new duties, by giving her new cares, would deprive her of what had become her chief happiness : the unrestrained indulgence of pensive musing—the allowing her mind to range wherever fancy dictated, and to dwell

with him, who, from the moment they first met, had filled her waking and sleeping contemplations. How was such an engrossing feeling to be overcome? “As Cliftown’s wife, Stuart *must* be forgotten,” was the awful whisper which conscience ever spoke. Gratitude and honour, feeling and principle, would all be violated, if Stuart’s memory were cherished. “The task must be accomplished,” she would exclaim to herself; “but not till I am married; till then, I am at liberty to exercise the only freedom I possess, freedom to think! But marriage will annihilate even that blessing, and I shall then be a slave indeed!”

Lord Cliftown’s love was at first an enigma to Geraldine; the difference of their tastes and character was so apparent, as to leave all the merit of the conquest to her beauty—a merit of so very low an order at best, in her eyes, and

in her particular case so highly improbable, that she would at times purposely neglect her appearance, in order, as she imagined, to convince Lord Cliftown of her very small claims to the admiration he was pleased to bestow. Little did Geraldine know that the pale face and marked melancholy features her glass reflected, were a very imperfect representation of the power her charms possessed; and when she left her dressing-room, bearing in mind the impression of her faded looks and plain attire, she little knew that her colourless cheeks only rendered the expression of her eyes more beautiful; and that the attractions of her mouth lay in disclosing teeth, according to the hacknied comparison, like pearls, and in giving utterance to the most melodious voice that ever came from the lips of woman, which neither dress nor time could alter. It was strange, pass-

ing strange, but the evil must be endured; though why a blue-eyed laughing cousin of Mrs. Douglas's, who was constantly in Cavendish Square, should attract no word or look from Lord Cliftown, and all such marks of favour be bestowed on her, was almost matter of rumination sufficient to put Colonel Stuart out of Geraldine's mind. When the fair, smiling, sylph-like Julia Crosbie appeared first, Geraldine rejoiced in the prospect of a rival; she even went so far as to pour into Julia's ears Lord Cliftown's praises, from the firm conviction, that very shortly such praises would be no matter of indifference to her little friend, and that in paving the way to a good understanding, she was befriending all parties, herself included. Disappointment, however, ensued; the laughing Julia indeed seemed nothing loth to admire and worship him

who was the idol of the whole house, save *one*,—but Lord Cliftown was not in the least inclined to return the compliment; he was the first to describe her as frivolous, insipid, missish, giddy, noisy; as though he himself were diametrically of an opposite character, refined, intellectual, and gentle!

A smile would sometimes cross Geraldine's heart, if not countenance, when her lover would turn with contempt from Julia Crosbie, singing, not otherwise than well, some lively ballad of the day, to listen to herself reading aloud "Childe Harold" to Mrs. Douglas, a poem which, with all its perfections, she was well aware her noble admirer could not in the least appreciate. She was the more decided in this judgment from having placed "The Corsair" in his Lordship's hands one day whilst she answered a letter, and which spirited tale,

and a tale of the sea too, only performed the part of a gentle soporific, closing his eyes in peaceful slumber: the book fell from Lord Cliftown's powerless fingers, and lay as an offering at his mistress's feet, who, with something of a look of disdain at the mind more feeble than the hands from which the slightly-valued poem had fallen, replaced the book on the shelf, and creeping out of the room, left her adorer to his repose.

The vision of Stuart appeared no more; in vain Geraldine examined every carriage, every horseman, and all she met. If it was indeed Stuart whom she had seen, he must have left London, or he could never have so well avoided her searching gaze: — of its being him, however, she had little doubt, nor that he looked ill; a confused notion also hung over her mind, that one of his arms was suspended in a sling, render-

ing the protection he had afforded her the more manly and deserving of gratitude. But the house in St. James's Square was closed, the family being absent ; she had no excuse, if she had had courage to write to Georgiana ; Sir John Vavasour she never saw,—thus all sources of inquiry were closed. Stuart however it was.

In the battle of ——— Colonel Stuart was a second time severely wounded ; amputation of the arm was for some time considered inevitable, and he himself, in his impatience to join his regiment, would have willingly consented to the operation : his friend Anderson, however, resisted his inclination, and, contrary to the opinion of many of his profession, pronounced that a cooler climate would soon restore him to perfect health, and spoke of England. Stuart sickened at the word—home had

no charms for him ; and for the sake of home to abandon the army, now advancing, as the reward for the many vicissitudes of fortune they had known, in the full tide of victory ; under their undaunted and chivalrous commander, was bitterness to his mind. His fever, however, hourly increased, and for the preservation of his life, more than of his limb, Anderson represented his case at Head Quarters ; orders were consequently issued for Colonel Stuart's leave of absence, and to compel him to obedience, he was made the bearer of despatches to England. Sick, solitary, and melancholy, Stuart bent his steps to the coast, from whence a fair breeze soon wafted him to the English shores.

The cause, too truly pourtrayed in his pallid cheeks and extenuated form, was a sad drawback to the felicity of Lady

Lawnley and Miss Stuart, in again beholding their beloved relation ; sighs were mingled with their smiles as they hung over his sick couch, for to a sick couch he was on his first arrival confined. But, as Anderson had prognosticated, a more temperate climate soon restored him to better health : his arm no longer hung powerless, his step became more firm, his cheeks less ghastly ; and all announced to his mother and sister the speedy return of their anxious days, compared to which, his actual presence, though in sickness, was comfort. Colonel Stuart was obliged, happily for his friends, to remain in England for the completion of despatches he was to take out ; and awaiting the pleasure of the Government, he accompanied his family into Warwickshire. The evening before his departure, he came up

from Putney, where he had been since his arrival in England—it was on that evening he met Geraldine.

Of her marriage he was not ignorant ; it had burst on his ear, told as the news of the day to enliven a sick room ; indifference was not the feeling with which it was received. It was some consolation to the blow thus given, that it led to details of Geraldine, he would otherwise have been unacquainted with ; and it soothed his mind to hear her name pronounced by Lady Lawnley and Georgiana in terms of affection and admiration. Vavasour's presence was no drawback to such communications ; for though he looked wise when Miss Hamilton was spoken of, yet Colonel Stuart was well aware how unconscious his friend was as to the degree that name was interesting to himself. Vavasour had indeed heard of a Mrs. Mortimer, who had

shed for a short time a lustre over the little society whom chance had assembled at A——; but, that Geraldine and Mrs. Mortimer were one and the same person, was an idea which never crossed the sober mind of Vavasour. With perfect innocence of intention to wound, therefore, did he, in his daily visits to Putney, communicate some fresh intelligence of the approaching nuptials: the colour of the carriage, of the horses; the price of the jewels; the settlements, all were known to Vavasour, and by him solely remembered, as he considered the communication might amuse, if not interest, Georgiana, and possibly her brother. As far as regarded the lady, his pains answered, but the unfortunate Stuart could only on such occasions veil the feelings of his heart beneath his bodily ailments. Penetration was not Vavasour's forte; and whilst Lady

Lawnley annoyed her son-in-law by offers of cooling drinks, alarmed at his flushing cheek, and Georgiana attributed his convulsive starts to renewed pain in his arm, Sir John proceeded on till his stock of intelligence was exhausted ; when, if Lady Mary was in the room, he had the compliment of her invariable remark.—

“How very odd that a married woman should be called Miss!—I thought they took the name of their husband, and were called Mrs.—except as in my case, when they have a right to be Lady.” This wise observation met with Lady Lawnley’s invariable answer, in the gentlest tone imaginable—“My love, Miss Hamilton is not married, she is only engaged to Lord Cliftown ; we are talking of the arrangements for her marriage, not of the marriage itself.”

Captain Hamilton and Lord Cliftown were great play-goers, and the Little Theatre in the Haymarket enabled them to indulge their taste without separating themselves from Charlotte and Geraldine; for at every other of our intellectual and refined theatrical amusements, the interest of the men and women are with admirable taste divided:—in the private boxes, men in the society of women cannot see; in the public boxes, women in any society cannot go. A sort of neutral ground, however, exists at present, where respectable persons of both sexes may sit in mutual enjoyment of a *play*, not a *pantomime*, without being elbowed by a blackguard, and that description of female, of which the blackguard may be termed the male gender. To this neutral ground, the Hamiltons, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, Julia Crosbie, and Lord Cliftown, one evening went

to witness the performance of 'The Critic'—a play very much over-acted, a fault more to be attributed to the bad writing of most moderns, than to bad actors. When five days out of six the merit of the piece rests alone with the performers, it is not surprising that they occasionally forget that the wit of a Sheridan requires no artificial support, and that they continue the habit of forcing applause, when simplicity is all that is required, and acting superfluous.

To see this play, Geraldine was seated, when her eyes were attracted from the stage to a box opposite, where were Lady Ashleigh and Sir Francis Clairville. A distinguished air pervaded the rest of the party, amongst whom was Mrs. Musgrove, no longer attended by Colonel Lennox, but by a thin youth with curling hair and small mustachios, whose attentions seemed to leave her no

present cause of regret, and to whose words she seemed far more attentive than to the words of the witty Sheridan. An act of the performance had just closed, when a great stir took place in the party ; all eyes were directed to the opposite side of the house. Signs were made to some one ; the party sat closer so as to leave a vacant place for this desired person, whom Sir Francis was evidently despatched to invite to their company. This solicited individual at length appeared, introduced by Clairville, who politely resigning him his seat by Lady Ashleigh, Geraldine beheld sink therein, Colonel Stuart ! No doubt of his identity now existed ; his arm was still in a sling, but his face again looked healthful, and his frame vigorous ; smiles frequently played round his mouth, excited by the performance, or by his companions. The play ended, and the farce

began, without any consciousness on Geraldine's part, but of what was passing in Lady Ashleigh's box ; happily, her position in that she occupied, enabled her to observe, without exciting observation : Mrs. Douglas, Julia and Charlotte, were in the front seats, herself in the row behind, with her brother and Lord Cliftown. The removal of the attraction, however, at length recalled her wandering mind. Lady Ashleigh rose to depart ; Stuart placed her shawl on her shoulders, and then offered his arm. "She will not accept it," thought Geraldine, "she must compassionate his feeble state ; and Sir Francis also, she will not like to neglect him." But Lady Ashleigh had no more compassion for Clairville's feelings, than for Stuart's infirmities ; and spite of the inconvenience of exposing his disabled arm to the pressure of the crowd, the thoughts of

which produced a cold shudder in the breast of Geraldine, arm-in-arm Colonel Stuart and Lady Ashleigh left the box—Mrs. Musgrove and her swain followed; the box-door closed, and Geraldine once more turned her head towards the stage.

Occupied as Lord Cliftown was by the acting, a little sigh which burst from Geraldine's heart he could not but attend to: he turned his head round; the tears were in her eyes. Lord Cliftown inquired tenderly what was the matter? whether she was tired, hot, bored? devised every physical cause possible for her dejection, from the hot air of the house to the cold air from the stage; and was actually on the point of hurrying the whole party home, to the utter dismay of Julia Crosbie—when Geraldine rallied her spirits sufficiently to declare boldly she was extremely

amused, and would not go home for worlds. Lord Cliftown looked doubtfully—Geraldine blushed.

“But why, my dear Geraldine, did I see tears in your eyes?”

Geraldine turned away her head, not sure that they were not there still. She however disclaimed her admirer's accusation, and drawing his attention to the actors, removed it from herself. The rest of the evening she was unusually gay: a forced state of spirits which would have deceived no other lover but Lord Cliftown. Though Geraldine did not wish to marry Lord Cliftown, and the most effective barrier to her union would be the discovery of her still fostered attachment to Stuart, yet she had far too much delicacy of mind to wish, even for such an end, the secrets of her heart to be laid open to view. When a woman loves, and loves truly, the concealment

of her passion seems the only terms by which she exists ; her feelings would be insupportable were they interpreted by every one that gazed on her :—to live in ordinary cases, she must deceive ; but how much more so, when the feeling, as in Geraldine's case, is intense, as though every favouring circumstance had given it birth, but hopeless, as though the grave enclosed its object.

The day following that of the play, opened on a new state of affairs. Lord Cliftown received a letter from the Secretary to the Admiralty, containing the important information of his being appointed to the *Active* frigate, vacant by the sudden death of her Commander. As the business of Government required her sailing immediately, she being under orders, and perfectly ready to sail, when the melancholy demise of her Captain took place, it was hoped Lord Clif-

town would not delay joining her. Many compliments of his known zeal, activity, and readiness, concluded a letter, which, however politely worded, left Lord Cliftown no alternative but prompt obedience, or resignation of the offer altogether. One thought of Geraldine made the last idea float for an instant in his mind ; it was but for an instant, and was quickly abandoned with a blush that it should ever have been entertained. Their immediate union might indeed take place, and with some hopes of prevailing upon Geraldine, he hinted at the scheme to Captain Hamilton—but, here, for once, her brother came to her support. He avowed only the impossibility of time being found for the ceremony ; but his secret objection arose from a sense of honour, more than any other cause. As a sailor himself, the uncertainty of Lord Cliftown's return

he was well aware of; and the securing to his sister his name and settlements at the moment they possibly parted for ever, would be, in the eyes of Hamilton, at best but a sordid proceeding, and he doubted not in the eyes of the world utterly contemptible.

The surprise and regret of those Lord Cliftown parted from was great; even Geraldine, whilst she rejoiced in the delay of her marriage, yet, in regarding him as her friend, not lover, felt all her kindly feelings aroused, and the tears flowed abundantly as she suffered Lord Cliftown's lips to press her pallid cheeks, and the faltering tone of her voice denoted an affection she was far from feeling when she bade him adieu. It was not in the nature of Geraldine to part coldly from one who had shown her only too much kindness; an amiable being of himself, and about

to embark in a cause of enterprise, self-denial, courage, and danger, from which he might never return. Geraldine's feelings Lord Cliftown knew nothing of; to love for himself he not unnaturally attributed them, and his last words were,

“Your low spirits last night, Geraldine, at the play, were prophetic of our parting to-day.”

Lord Cliftown was hardly gone when a sudden thought entered the mind of Hamilton—he might have gone with him: this produced another idea—he would follow: then ensued the thought, that though he loved Lord Cliftown, and enjoyed a trip to Portsmouth, yet he could not bear to leave his wife behind, so she must go also; and Cliftown would hardly thank him for coming if Geraldine was not of the party, therefore she must be included:—and, as the Captain was as completely

master in his own house as on board a ship, his ideas were all embodied and executed without a dissenting word. His wife, indeed, liked the scheme, but poor Geraldine had confused notions floating in her mind, and as melancholy as confused, that towns had churches, and ships chaplains, and that contrary winds did arise, detaining those that depended upon them for weeks and weeks. Contrary winds but too truly detained the *Active* at Spithead; Lord Cliftown was, however, gone on board when his friends reached Portsmouth. Captain Hamilton sent him a hurried note, informing him of their arrival, and of their intention of visiting him the next day. This scheme was only in part destined to be accomplished: Captain Hamilton was obliged to go alone; Charlotte, from the fatigue of her journey, was too unwell to leave the

house; and Geraldine firmly resisted her brother's proposal of visiting the *Active* without her. She was not, however, so forcibly urged as might be expected; for though Hamilton wished Cliftown to be gratified with a visit from his mistress, yet he did not like his wife to remain companionless—the two ladies, consequently, were left together. Captain Hamilton returned to a late dinner, and, as he swallowed the inn fare with the keen appetite which the air of his almost native element gave, he descanted on the merits of the *Active* frigate:—such a ship! such a crew! such a commander!—all was enchantment. Mrs. Hamilton sighed, and, turning away her head from the animated countenance and cruelly bright eye of him she loved, anticipated that this Portsmouth trip would be productive, on their return to London, of a walk

to the Admiralty, offers of service ; a ship ; death in battle, or by the yellow fever in the West Indies ; a broken heart for herself, and an orphan babe for her parents to weep over ! As thus his wife mused, her lord ate on and talked on, whilst Geraldine listened to the mournful notes of a bugle, which some person in the street occasionally brought forth. This bugle at length attracted her brother's remark to the waiter.

“ What has that military instrument to do in this part of the town ? Soldiers should be content with their own place, and not wander forth beyond their own limits, the barracks.”

“ Oh, Sir,” replied the waiter, “ that man who is playing away has nothing to do with the garrison ; he is one of a regiment come in here to embark for Portugal.”

“He must have very little to do,” observed Hamilton, who had a true nautical prejudice in favour of his own profession, and against that of the land, “to be making that vile noise instead of looking after his business. Are the whole regiment quartered in this house?”

“Oh Lord! no, Sir; they were put on board the moment they arrived three days back, and are rolling about in a lamentable condition, waiting for a change of wind. The man who annoys you is an officer’s servant, now in this house — Captain Crofton — he is going out as Aide-de-camp to his uncle, General Crofton.”

“Is General Crofton here?” inquired Hamilton, who had some acquaintance with him.

“Yes, the General arrived to-day; he, Colonel Stuart, and this poor weed of

a boy they call Captain. They are at dinner this very moment in the next room. You know the General, Sir?"

"Yes," answered Hamilton fiercely, for the name of Stuart did not sound pleasantly in his ear, particularly when he observed Geraldine turn eagerly to the waiter in anticipation of further intelligence. She was not entirely disappointed; he continued his information by observing, "The General, the Colonel, and the Captain, were all in grand tribulation when they found the wind did not serve for sailing, for the whole party be bound for the same place: though why they should be in such a hurry I do not understand; for they be dry and safe now, with a good dinner before them, which is more than they may be a long time again. The General, to be sure, is a fine, hale man, who looks as if he could bear roughing it;

but his nephew is a mere child, pink and white, with rings on his fingers, and a chain on his throat; all to be plunder to those vile French dogs, I would lay my life. As to the Colonel—poor gentleman! he has had enough of fighting, I should have thought—it was but the other day he came home hardly able to crawl, from his wounds; and now he goes out again! But, however, master and I have no right to complain, for the war makes the inn thrive—I do not lose for my own share, I can tell—Why, it was but the other day, a poor youth, just such another as this Captain Crofton, in his hurry to embark, forgot the change for a ten-pound note he had given for a mutton-chop.”

“You do not mean to say you took possession of the money,” demanded Captain Hamilton.

“ Dear Sir, master did not want it !”

“ Your master ! neither you nor your master have a right to a shilling beyond what was owing for the bill : it is the youth’s, whoever he is ; and you should send the money to him, or give it some honest person to keep till his return.”

“ He might keep it a long time, then, I suspect,” observed the conscientious waiter, with an odious grin.

“ I did run down stairs after the youth, when I discovered the mistake ; but he flew as if the French were behind rather than before him ; and when he was in the street, it was no business of mine to follow him. But that is the General’s bell a second time—they be wanting another bottle of wine, I would swear—so, if you please, Sir, I must be gone.”

CHAPTER X.

THE following morning dawned ; and Geraldine, after a sleepless night, gladly hailed its approach. It opened on any thing but a sleeping world ; the streets were already full, voices were heard in the house, doors were hastily opened and shut, every thing proclaimed that night had not arrested business or pleasure. Geraldine had risen, and from a window gazed at the multitudes below ; from some snatches of whose discourse, she gathered the information of a change in the wind—a change, which, in bearing off Cliftown, would also carry away Stuart. A plaintive voice attracted her

notice beneath the window—it was that of a female ; her low tone only reached the ear of Geraldine as one of distress, but the reply, in a rough male voice, was sufficiently audible.

“ You are too late: the wind has shifted round to the favourable point ; all preparations were instantly made for starting, and a few minutes ago I saw them actually under sail ; but it is but a sluggish sort of an affair, this wind that they have got, and I dare say they are still close on shore.”

“ Then if the wind was to sink still more, I perhaps might see ?” The voice was drowned in the noise of a passing carriage, others succeeded, and when a peaceful moment arrived the man was speaking.

“ To be sure it is a sad job ; fourteen miles to have walked this morning, and to be disappointed at last !”

An audible and heartfelt sigh was the only answer. The man seemed to wish to console his friend ; but sighs and tears were all that reached Geraldine, mingled with every discordant noise the principal street of such a town as Portsmouth could produce. In the intervals of silence, the following snatches of discourse met her ear.

“Nay, nay ; food for powder, say ye ! You cannot tell that. Every ball has its billet, as I well know, and there may be none for your John.”

* * * *

“And so he is a corporal, is he ? Why, bless my soul, he may come back an officer, and make you an officer’s lady, and then”

* * * *

“Why, as to seeing the transports, I do not know what good that can do you ;

but, nevertheless, I am willing to show them to you, as from the battery and through this glass you may see plain enough, even to catching a sight, perhaps, of your friend amongst the red coats. Here, take my arm, for you have need to be weary."

The last words were hardly heard by Geraldine, when she resolved to profit also by the proposal, and herself to gaze on ships carrying one quite as dear as him the female sighed so heavily after. She was in the street in an instant, and close behind the pair who were to be her escort. She followed until they reached a spot whence the vessels they sought were distinctly to be seen—Three heavy, dark, slow-moving ships, their decks crowded by men, and preceded by a light sloop, which, under little sail, kept a short way a-head, in a

careless contemptuous manner, restraining her powers to the capacity of her ill-shapen companions.

“On board one of those ships is my poor John,” said Geraldine’s female guide.

“Stuart is also there,” murmured Geraldine.

“Did you speak, Madam?” said the man, turning suddenly round and addressing Miss Hamilton. She coloured, and acknowledged her object was to see the transports.

“Perhaps, Madam,” said the woman, looking at Geraldine attentively and with tears in her eyes, “perhaps you know some one on board; but if you wished them farewell, you were more fortunate than me. To think of my poor John being gone, perhaps for ever, without one last look!”

“You are very much to be pitied,”

said Geraldine ; “ in that respect more so than myself. No one on board those ships could have wished me adieu. I could lay no claim to such kindness from any one there.” But the tears which started into Geraldine’s eyes proclaimed her not the less an object of sympathy.

Some time elapsed : Geraldine still remained gazing on the dancing waves as they gently moved the various vessels which rode on their surface. Those who had guided her to the spot had retired ; the one to his daily business, the other to retrace her forlorn steps in solitude and sorrow. Every thing immediately around seemed tranquil and lonely ; and as Geraldine regarded the more distant scene, many a bitter tear chased each other down her cheek whilst she pronounced—

“ Still on its march, unnoticed and unfelt,
Moves on our being. We do live and breathe,
And we are gone. The spoiler heeds us not.
We have our spring-time and our rottenness ;
And as we fall, another race succeeds,
To perish likewise. Meanwhile nature smiles—
The seasons run their round. The sun fulfils
His annual course, and heaven and earth remain
Still changing, yet unchanged—still doom'd to
feel
Endless mutation in perpetual rest.”

“ And has the world such charms for
Geraldine Hamilton,” exclaimed a voice
which made the blood thrill in each vein
of her he addressed, “ that she laments
the brevity of life? Or is it in the same
spirit which pervaded the short and
melancholy career of him she quotes,
that she repeats his lines—a spirit more
sad than joyous, more contemplative
of the bitters than the sweets of life,
more in unison with the feelings of him
who speaks than of her whom he ad-
dresses? Be not alarmed ; do not shun

me. Listen once more to one whom you did not always avoid, whom you may never speak to more."

"Heavens! is it Stuart whom I see and hear?" said Geraldine, fixing her melancholy gaze on him, who had now placed himself by her side on the wall where she was seated. "But he has nothing to say to which I may listen, nothing that should detain me from home to hear."

"Is there, then, no sympathetic feeling of any kind left between us? Is there no topic common to us both? I was never backward in acknowledging Cliftown's merits,—may I not name him?—and would you not detail to me the last moments of Albert Douglas, if I asked you? I know well the motive of this early walk," he continued.

Geraldine looked surprised; a haughty shade passed over her countenance.

“ You have shown great penetration, but still you may be mistaken : it would be possible to visit this beautiful scene for itself, without any individual interest.”

“ But if a lover created that interest ?”

Geraldine started ; her countenance assumed a still more haughty air, whilst blushes covered her cheeks.

“ You blush ; why be ashamed ? I cannot blame you.” Geraldine arose. “ What, leave me !” continued Colonel Stuart, “ and in such haste ! there is no one at home now to blame your protracted stay.”

“ The motive of my being here seems so well understood by you, and so boldly touched upon, that no further proof of my friendship can be required. I am sorry my feelings should be so easily penetrated, and shall take care in future not

to afford an opportunity for the scrutiny of curious eyes."

Colonel Stuart looked surprised.

"What feelings do you talk of?" and he seized her hand.

"What feelings!" and the tears started into Geraldine's eyes. "Alas! they have been in every way uncalled for. Had I known you were on shore, the attraction here would not have existed; had I known the manner you could accost me, no temptation should have drawn me from home."

Colonel Stuart's eyes brightened as Geraldine spoke.

"And what attraction did draw you hither but that vessel?" pointing to a beautiful frigate, which, in her anxiety to look at the transports, Geraldine had quite overlooked.

"What vessel? whose frigate is that?"

"Cliftown's."

Geraldine covered her face with her hands.

“It was not, then, his vessel which drew you forth so early from home?—it was not for him your light step this morning attracted my observation, and, pardon me, this interview? Am I, then, to understand that those dark ill-shapen things, called troop-ships, were your object? Cliftown, and Cliftown alone I imagined it was, who filled your mind as you gazed on the ocean; it was *his* vessel, *his* perils, *his* absence, which I conceived caused the gentle sighs I heard as I watched you at a distance. Little did I suspect that any interest in a poor soldier’s fate produced one sigh from that anxious bosom.”

The face of Geraldine was still concealed by her hands; a silence ensued. At length, slowly disclosing her blushing cheeks, she exclaimed—

“ Once more my heart is laid open to your view ; but circumstances are altered since first you knew my feelings ; and honourably as you have used confidence so unwarily bestowed, I now claim far more indulgence, far more discretion. I am no longer deserted, abandoned, unanswerable for my conduct to a living being : I have a brother, whose affection is chiefly manifested by jealousy of my behaviour ; and I am the affianced bride of one who, however unsought, has bestowed on me affection, which, though I cannot return, I am bound to respect.”

“ You are still, then, only an affianced bride ?”

“ Did you imagine otherwise ?”

“ I hardly supposed Cliftown could leave you not his wife.”

“ Our immediate union was thought of ; but, happily, my brother did not

approve. I trust that there is now no time, with his many occupations, even if the wind should become contrary, and detain him."

"Thank God!" murmured Stuart.

"It can make no difference to you—the separation of the grave I look upon to be hardly a greater barrier than exists between us: this accidental meeting will probably be our parting interview for ever."

"Our minds will not be separated, Geraldine."

"Alas! such mental approximation is only to embitter existence the more, by removing one further from those with whom one bodily exists. If it is possible, you should forget."

"I would not, if it were possible. As the wife of Lord Cliftown, you may imagine it your duty—Lady Mary

Stuart claims no such mark of attention from me. *You have seen my wife.*"

"Yes ; I am acquainted also with her excellent mother, and your sweet sister."

"They told me of your meeting, unknowing how interesting the account was to me, and how gratifying to hear your praises from their lips."

A pause ensued ; Geraldine regarded Colonel Stuart attentively.

"You have been very ill?"

"Nothing to lament over: the old story, a wound."

Geraldine sighed.

"When first we met, that brow of yours was smooth as a child's; and do you remember Sir John Vavasour's eternal and single joke on the subject of your fears at growing fat, which made you eat little? whilst I had my secret

misgivings that it was our Irish fare disgusted you. If Sir John was right, you need be under no further alarm."

"Time of itself alters, though you are not changed."

"My life has not been happy, but calm. I never have been happy, and never shall; but my sorrows are not such as to destroy the serenity of the features. It is such as you, who have toiled under scorching suns, lain on the cold earth, and fought and thought for others—whose mind has been active as your body—it is such as you whose countenance betrays those interesting, noble marks. I ought not to wish it should be otherwise; but why, with that debilitated arm, are you again to hurry into the land of war? why not remain a little longer at home—a home which such a mother and sister adorn? If words could avail, how eloquent I could be to make

you give your wearied frame rest, and to live once more for your friends !”

Geraldine’s eyes rested, as she spoke, on those of Stuart : he turned away to avoid their expression.

“ Home ! I abhor my home.” Geraldine started. “ Is not my wife there ?” he added in a bitter voice.

“ But your sister !” continued Geraldine.

“ My sister ! she cannot minister to my ills : active life is the only medicine that can do me good. Poor Georgiana ! one whose existence is love, unrequited love I fear, she is no fitting companion for him whose feelings are his bane. While she sighs for Halliday, and Vavasour as hopelessly sighs for her, should I think less of you, or more of my wife ?”

As Colonel Stuart ceased to speak, the splashing of oars was distinctly heard, and a boat shot on from beneath

that part of the wall on which he and Geraldine were seated. They both started at finding any one so near.

“Cliftown, I suppose,” observed Colonel Stuart, glancing his eye on the light boat, which was soon lost amongst the larger vessels: “Cliftown, I suppose, keeping watch over his bride.”

“Oh no, impossible; Lord Cliftown is too unsuspicious, and would not watch any one for all the gold of Peru.” And yet, as Geraldine spoke, she waited with anxiety for the boat to re-appear; it did not, and she was left doubtful as to what ship it had made for. Colonel Stuart implored Geraldine to impart to him how Lord Cliftown had ever become her lover, and much more her destined husband. Geraldine felt his right to ask, but the difficulty was to answer. Much as Colonel Stuart admired her, he might think

hardly well enough of her attractions to make it very probable that Cliftown's love could have burst forth entirely unencouraged, and his proposal be made without a word from her to betoken its being acceptable; and that, when it was declared, it was still unsanctioned by herself, who had never, by word or deed, given proof of any feeling warmer than friendship for him to whom she was engaged. To Stuart's delicate and fastidious mind, how was all this to be explained?—and his favourable opinion of Lord Cliftown's understanding and feelings would not render the explanation more easy. Still, tell her tale she must. It was brief:—She was poor, Lord Cliftown devoted, her brother powerful, his wife enthusiastic in his favour, and her union with Stuart hopeless. She herself could never be happy, but she was told she might render

another so :—this she did not believe ; but what was more probable, she might render him unhappy by rejecting him. As he would probably be much at sea, his wife would not be that engrossing object which, in another profession, might be the case ; and in looking after his affairs and interests at home, and leading a retired life, she might be considered as fulfilling her duties as well as if her attachment was greater and their tastes less dissimilar.

Geraldine sighed, as she concluded. Colonel Stuart observed, “ As a wife you may be happier than you are at present.”

“ Never — I admire Lord Cliftown’s naval character ; I esteem his generosity and sincerity of sentiment ; but his tenderness I can never return. His society can never be otherwise than wearisome to me ; our pursuits are perfectly dif-

ferent, and even our opinions and feelings: but to render him the duty I shall owe him, I must affect very contrary sentiments—my breaking heart must laugh, my soured mind express content, my understanding ignorance. To render him not wretched, I must deceive; deception will become identified in my nature, and I shall be unworthy in my own eyes, hateful and undeserving of love or respect in those of others. When I am Cliftown's wife, forget me; for as such, the Geraldine Hamilton you have liked will be lost to you in every way; she will exist only in idea; she will have died to you for ever as the wife of your friend."

"How widely you mistake!"

"No, I do not mistake: and it is far better as it is; in ceasing to like me, you may—"

"Name it not, Geraldine. I never

can cease to think less well of you than at this moment."

Geraldine arose. She offered her hand to Stuart. "I must depart,—I have remained here far too long,—my brother may come in search of me,—follow me not :—God bless you !"

CHAPTER XI.

LORD CLIFTOWN sailed : he took no leave of Geraldine beyond a hasty message given to Captain Hamilton at parting, who remained on board till the last moment. The Hamiltons did not immediately return to London ; a few days were given to some old naval friends of Hamilton's at Portsmouth : and when they had finished their visit, Lady Ashleigh pressed them to stop with her and her lord on their road to London.

“ We are only just arrived,” wrote Lady Ashleigh, “ and, strictly, nobody.”

Till the carriage drove up to the

steps of the house at Ashleigh Park, it had not entered the mind of Geraldine that, actually, *no one* might not be comprised as the sense in which Lady Ashleigh's *nobody* was to be taken. The supposed extended signification of the term arose to her mind on observing a very fine dog, the owner of whom she well remembered was Sir Francis Clairville, sunning himself in front of the house: it was, therefore, not with any surprise that the master of the animal met Geraldine's eye, seated by Lady Ashleigh at the piano-forte, turning over the leaves of a music-book.

Lady Ashleigh received them in her most cordial manner. It was only manner; but as bad manners are always blamed, why are not good manners to be admired for themselves alone, without reference to heart, feeling, or wisdom? Their full value was not lost

on the Hamiltons ; and when the little Countess squeezed their hands, declared her delight at seeing them, pressed them to eat, made them sit round the fire—for, a true English summer day, it was colder than at Christmas—they were ready to return her civilities in the most cordial form, and to dismiss from their minds that their society could be nothing to Lady Ashleigh, and that a *tête-à-tête* with Sir Francis Clairville was very far from a matter of indifference to her.

Not every one that can talk need talk. Geraldine profited by this to be silent, leaving Mrs. Hamilton and Lady Ashleigh to run on on fifty different topics, which the lively mind of the Countess soon brought forward for their entertainment. But though Geraldine did not speak, she could observe ; and one observation she speedily made—the

altered manners of Clairville to Lady Ashleigh. The very room they were in, brought him forcibly to her mind, such as he was the year before. She well remembered his downcast eyes in addressing Lady Ashleigh, his subdued voice, faltering steps, and doubtful sentiments till hers were expressed. She saw now his fixed and decided gaze, his careless air, and determined manner, and heard a voice, though always insinuating, yet breathing words more of command than entreaty. He had moved from the piano-forte to throw himself on a sofa, where he lay reclined muttering a few occasional notes of the air he had lately been singing: once he spoke; it was to contradict Lady Ashleigh. Geraldine started, anticipating the rebuff that must ensue; but no retort was made by the usually spirited Countess: a slight colour tinged her

cheek, and Geraldine could have fancied a tear glistened on her eyelid, but she was silent. Geraldine's eye turned from her to Sir Francis: the expression of his countenance was very different—it was that of triumph:—a faint shudder came over her, and she turned away her head from both. A few minutes brought her other subjects of contemplation—the conversation turned on the object which had brought the Hamiltons to Portsmouth, to take leave of Lord Cliftown.

“You did not hear, by chance,” inquired Lady Ashleigh, “if Colonel Stuart had sailed?”

Mrs. Hamilton took upon herself to answer she believed he had sailed the same morning as Lord Cliftown.

“He was at the play with us the night before he left London,” continued Lady Ashleigh, “and we wanted

him to delay his journey, that he might pay us a visit on his road ; but the fury of these Spanish heroes is so great for fighting, that though his wounds make his absence depend entirely on himself, he would not remain over another twenty-four hours, for all my soft words."

"That he did not give you his company," observed Sir Francis, speaking in his recumbent attitude, "need not be a subject of deep offence ; for in returning abroad, he resisted Cline's peremptory orders that he should give himself a month's more rest. If Cline, therefore, failed, no wonder you could not prevail."

"Not at all : I still think Colonel Stuart used me very ill ; for in obeying Cline's orders, he would have had to remain with an odious wife,—a cir-

cumstance which might render the cannon's mouth preferable."

"Do you speak generally, or particularly?"

"Particularly of course, Sir Francis."

"If you had spoken generally, I should not have been surprised."

The colour was a second time brought to Lady Ashleigh's cheeks by the ingenious Sir Francis. After a moment's pause, she enquired of Mrs. Hamilton if she were acquainted with Colonel Stuart: "Because, if you are not," she continued, "my remark requires elucidation. Colonel Stuart has the misfortune to be married to a woman of such weak mind as to border on idiotcy; her fortune was the bait, held out by her father, and though avarice is not generally the vice of youth, yet Colonel Stuart, then quite a boy, could not re-

sist the glittering snare : he fell therein, and has been wretched ever since. If you were acquainted with him, you would soon discover he is worthy of a better lot."

Her husband not being present, Mrs. Hamilton, in answer to Lady Ashleigh's communication, felt no scruple in avowing her opinion of Colonel Stuart, in a manner that made Geraldine regard her sister-in-law with gratitude as well as love.

"Though not acquainted with Colonel Stuart," she said, "I have every reason in the world to admire his character, and regret his misfortunes. The kindness he showed to, and the love he inspired in an only and most beloved brother, has given me an interest in his fate which no time or circumstance can ever alter."

“ You have a brother then ?” enquired Lady Ashleigh.

“ I *had* one—he died in the service of his country.”

“ And you, too,” exclaimed Lady Ashleigh, “ have a name to swell the list of the brave and good, whose loss has desolated so many homes, broken so many hearts ;” and her voice sinking as she spoke, and her eyes resting on a bracelet of auburn hair, which encircled her wrist, she pronounced—

“ It is not the tear at the moment shed,
When the cold turf has just been laid o’er him,
Can tell how belov’d was the spirit that’s fled,
Nor how deep in our hearts we deplore him.
’Tis the tear throughout the long night wept
Of a life by his loss all shaded ;
’Tis the dear remembrance, fondly kept,
When all lighter sorrows are faded.”

Lord Ashleigh entered, paid his compliments to the new arrivals, and hur-

ried the ladies to their apartments. Lady Ashleigh retired to her's to weep for the memory of her first love, Elliot; and, with the tears streaming down her cheeks, to arrange her hair in the manner most admired by Sir Francis Clairville. Woman ! woman ! vanity and feeling are thy attributes !

The "nobody" of Lady Ashleigh consisted, besides Sir Francis, of several neighbours to dine, and a sister of Lord Ashleigh's, Lady Anne, and her husband, General Montresor : so that Lord Ashleigh's eye brightened as he viewed his lady through a vista of six precious souls on each flank ; the day before, the walls of his spacious dining room having witnessed the degrading view of a party of five.

The neighbours were persons of small note. Geraldine was seated between Sir Francis and General Montresor : the

first was in very fair proportions attentive to Lady Ashleigh and attentive to the dishes ; the last was a man of few words, immense appetite, and enormous whiskers. His lady deserves a less cursory description.

Lady Anne Montresor was a person who, never having looked young, as youth passed away still retained the air she had always had, and bore no marks of those passing years of which many of her contemporaries carried fatal witness in their bending or spreading forms or faded complexions. But though not the beauty of youth, beauty Lady Anne ever had, and still possessed ; and when Geraldine's eye rested upon her as she sat by her brother's side, she thought she had rarely seen so handsome a person. Even Lady Ashleigh, lovely as she was, and far junior to her sister-in-law, had yet to suffer a partial eclipse in the

eyes of those who, as in Geraldine's case, judged for themselves without reference to fashion or prejudice. By the ordeal of such authorities, Lady Ashleigh's charms would have every thing to expect, and Lady Anne's nothing to hope ; for Lady Anne was no longer the fashion, and even when she was, her countenance was not strictly popular—it was too marked, too decided, and penetrating. In one respect, she formed a very decided contrast to any one Geraldine had ever before beheld at Ashleigh, in attention to the master of the house. Lord Ashleigh's remarks, when explained by his sister, were no longer absurd, and she would bend his meaning to the very verge of wit and sense, if not actually into the very territory itself ; so much so, as to bewilder if not please the general audience, and de-

light his Lordship with the wonders he had performed. Geraldine looked towards Lady Ashleigh to see if she did not feel the reproof to her own very opposite conduct; but the lesson there was completely lost: her ear was bent to the mouth of Clairville, with that expression of countenance denoting more pleasure than profit in his discourse; of her sister and husband she was entirely unobservant.

Lady Anne's countenance, though handsome, was not one of happiness—there was a lurking restlessness in her glance, indicative of a mind not entirely occupied by the present; and when roused to observe the passing scene, there was a shade of haughty contempt on her countenance as regarded every thing but her brother, whom she evidently wished to support:—whence ori-

ginated this disdain of her species, Geraldine was not long to remain in ignorance.

Lady Ashleigh and Geraldine walked out the next morning together. Something of intimacy now existed between the ladies; and the consequence was, some good-humoured but far from agreeable raillery on the subject of her engagement with Lord Cliftown, which Geraldine had to endure at the hands of the lively Countess.

“Talking of marriage,” she continued, “what think you of our bride?”

“Bride!”

“Yes, Anne Montresor; she has only been married a month. To be sure, she and her General look as if they had been man and wife twenty years, but nevertheless their honeymoon has only just waned. I believe she had put in the marriage articles, that all tenderness

was to be dispensed with : she had none to give, poor soul ! so, as far as she was concerned, it was generous not to expect it from another.”

“ Lady Anne did not marry for love then ? or is she one of those happy or unhappy beings, as it may be, who never knew what love was ? ”

“ Alas ! if such there are, Anne Montresor is not one, as I could well explain ; and I do not know why I should not explain : her story is no secret, and if I did not tell it you, Clairville, or twenty others, might give you a garbled tale only by asking for it ; and besides, I am not sure that it may not be a salutary lesson for you, Miss Hamilton. I am told,—the birds in the air will talk, you know,—that you cling to your independence with as much pertinacity as once did poor Anne ; and that if Lord Cliftown had not something in him of

the spirit which inspired the knights of old to persevere, he would never have moved your obdurate heart : do not despise such spirit, for lack of which in Anne's adorers, she is now the wife of General Montresor. Now for my tale. — The last Lord Ashleigh died ages ago, leaving two children, my present Earl and his sister Anne, who went to reside with her maternal uncle, Mr. Bouverie, a widower, rich, agreeable, and indulgent. He spoiled his niece, made her the mistress of his house, fortune, stables, carriages, opera-boxes, play-boxes, jewel-boxes, &c. &c. ; in short, Anne appeared the most blessed of women, and for several years she was quite satisfied she was so. The society in which she moved were at her feet ; her wit, talents, beauty, and temper, rendered her irresistible ; and all her male friends seemed only to await her good

pleasure to declare themselves her slaves for life. She was reported for numbers, and numbers, it was reported, she rejected: that the last was as unfounded as the first, no one, but Anne herself, was aware of; but it was the fact. The independence of her situation, and her freedom from restraint in her uncle's house, placed her entirely on the footing of a married woman. It was the business of every one to court her who was the mistress of a house in which reigned gaiety, splendour, ease, and sociability; she was consequently by some flattered, by most admired, and by many made love to. As she gave no love in return, for a long time it excited no surprise that it was merely talk. A sudden light burst upon her. Many of her contemporaries and friends married—men whom she thought her slaves became the willing slaves for life of women who, com-

pared to herself, were dowdies and ugly, and were lost to her as lovers and society ; whilst others married, but continued their attentions as if to mark how little such devoirs had formerly meant.

“ About this time I married, and first knew Lady Anne Ashleigh, as she then was. She is now as beautiful as ever, but no one can guess when they observe her fixed gaze, and mouth unmoved by even a transient smile, the animation she once possessed. I see her now urging on her horse to a pace which defied pursuit ; and as she flew, her laughing, happy voice still rings in my ear, witnessing the discomfiture of her companions, then the gayest and most fashionable of the land. Her open manner, ease, spirit, and wit, combined to render her adorable ; and thus when she sang airs rather of a bold than tender nature, but yet

perfection in their way, her power was irresistible.

“ Suddenly she appeared changed—her manners were more subdued, her countenance had transient shades of reflection. I guessed the cause, but not the object. In the consequent scrutiny which I now cast around on those with whom she lived, I was first struck by suspecting how little genuine were the professions which I knew were hourly poured into my sister’s ear, in the subtle tongue or politic guise which approaches *flirting* so near, and yet keeps it so far removed from all that is open, honest, and sincere ; placing it on the very verge of love, of which it is the most artificial semblance ever invented to torture those who have affections to lose.

“ The secret was at length discovered. A young man of the name of Compton,

destined for the church, the younger son of a gentleman of good family and fortune, but himself only inheriting a younger brother's share, had been much thrown into Anne's society at a very early period of life, when at a clergyman's in the neighbourhood of Mr. Bouverie's country-seat, preparatory to his going to Oxford.

“ Mr. Bouverie's became far more his home than his tutor's; and even when at College, his vacations were often spent at the residence of Lady Anne's uncle. On leaving College he went abroad, and remained two years; at his return he was received by his early friends with all their former kindness. His manner with Lady Anne was that of a younger brother, and her's to him, I never suspected, concealed a warmer feeling. Young Compton had much that was pleasing, much that was amiable in his

character; but compared to the generality of Anne's friends, was very inferior both in talent and appearance. His health was delicate, which threw a languor over his air, and gave at times an indifference to his manners, seemingly most uncongenial to the taste of Lady Anne. Though not devoid of spirit or ability, he seldom exerted himself to the full extent of his powers of mind or body. Silent, sometimes dejected, but always gentle and gentleman-like, he was by many imagined dull; but that such was a mistake, constantly appeared when he was inspired by the presence of Anne, who was never backward in her endeavours to rouse him into spirit or spirits. Handsome he certainly was, but precisely the style of beauty once held in utter contempt by Anne—fair and feminine. Such as he, was the last person to excite my sus-

pitions as to where her affections were placed; and whilst my surmises wandered from the beauty Mr. Halliday, to the sentimental Lord Dawson, and again to Clairville, or some married man, even, of the society, I totally overlooked the downcast eyes of the quiet, unobtrusive Compton, as guilty of gaining the love of one who carried her heart so proudly as if disdainful of the power of man, and whom Compton himself, with a humility which seemed to place love as far as possible from his feelings, styled '*his Patroness*.' The bitter part of my story is to come. Why Anne loved Compton, she could probably hardly explain to her own mind. But that she did so, was soon no secret to herself, or to any one else but the object of her affections and her uncle. Mr. Bouverie's health was gradually declining, and his own state occupied him entirely; but

Compton's blindness was not so easily accounted for. It might be indifference, it might be modesty ; but that modesty and indifference would quickly vanish, when the real state of the case was explained, I was confident, and readily took upon myself, as I imagined, the agreeable task of unveiling to the young man's eyes his pleasing prospects ; for though I have since reflected that the marriage would have been a very indiscreet one, yet at that time I was all for love, and prudence was sickening to my feelings. I have had my own trials, and have known moments when death would have been a relief from the misery I endured ; but nothing I ever suffered could be compared to the tortures, the agony, almost madness, I was destined to witness in communicating to Anne the result of my information to Compton. He loved—but not her:—he was en-

gaged to marry. Abroad he had fallen in with one on whom he had bestowed his heart. The possession of a living with which he was soon to be endowed, was the destined time for making his engagement known to the world : it had long been sanctioned by the father of his destined bride and his own brother, the only two persons to whom his secret was known, and whom he had need to consult. To do Henry Compton justice, he was deeply affected at poor Anne's attachment, and most truly and earnestly did he profess his previous ignorance that such should be the case ; but all he said, or all he felt, could pour no balm on the wounds inflicted on a spirit so proud as Anne's — on one who valued far more her worldly knowledge, and manly mind, than the beauties of her person — who could pass over any slight to her outward appearance, but would fire up when her understanding or

wit was reflected upon. And for her to love and love unrequited, to sue and be rejected by one so much her inferior, was madness!

“ But it is time to conclude:—from that hour Anne’s character was changed; gloom took place of gaiety, and an illiberal spirit prevailed in one who had been free from prejudice, almost to a fault. Her disappointment was no secret, and her taste or folly was pretty severely animadverted upon in the world. She was deemed weak, ignorant, childish, vain, strange, unfeminine, and unladylike; but the world’s opinion had never been Anne’s law, and it was now a perfect matter of indifference:—their sarcasms, or their abuse, were nothing to one writhing under the wounds of disappointed love. But disappointed love was not all the misery she felt; it was the addition to other feelings which gave the death-blow to her peace. I

will try to make you acquainted with the nature of her despair, as expressed in a letter she wrote to me on leaving England, shortly after my explanation with Compton. When Anne first came out into the world, love of pleasure, admiration, riding, dancing, talking, laughing, engrossed her mind utterly ; and that she could love anything else, was as much unsuspected by herself as her companions. Still Anne had a heart, and as she grew older she began secretly to make the discovery, and with equal solicitude to examine how her associates were in that respect :—the scrutiny was not particularly satisfactory.

“ Mr. Bouverie’s house was in some respects that of a bachelor’s, spite of his niece’s presence ; and to be pleasant men of the world, more than to be men of character, was the passport to his table. His society was, therefore, agreeable and fashionable ; but they were a gay though

heartless set, as I am necessitated to own, though they were my very particular friends. When Anne, therefore, fixed her affections on Compton, she had a very sufficient reason for doing so: he was the only person she lived with, who, from habit, affection, policy, or nature, had any feeling in his bosom unconnected with self. That his affections were not his own to bestow, she knew not, and, I fear, dreaded not; she was undeceived, and with the disappointment came no power to seek relief elsewhere. No sympathy for her wounds existed in the breasts of those who had sought her smiles, and now fled her tears. Like the lion in the fable she was prostrate, and the feeble as well as the strong had the power to indulge their contempt or more insulting pity. Soured with herself and with the world, Anne had still spirit left to conceal her feelings from her

uncle. She accompanied him abroad, and for the remainder of his days devoted herself to him. Her beauty still had power to captivate General Montresor ; but she never would listen to his vows till after the death of Mr. Bouverie ; she then accepted, not very graciously, her admirer's hand, and, as the General is rich though dull, and Anne clever though poor, their portions are very equally divided, if we leave out of the scale *affection*, which is entirely on the side of the gentleman.

“ Such is my sister's fate, such is the fate of women : their feelings are their bane ; and for once that they lead to good, in ten thousand instances they produce wretchedness and evil. I speak from experience,” and Lady Ashleigh grasped Geraldine's arm on which she leaned : “ you weep,—is it experience that tells you I speak truth ?”

For a few minutes silence ensued—

it was broken by the sound of footsteps approaching them. "Some one is joining us," exclaimed Lady Ashleigh, hurrying on her steps; "I am in no humour for an addition to our party. Whoever the person is, we will cut him dead."

"You will, will you?" said Sir Francis Clairville from behind.

"Sir Francis! I thought you had rode to Petersfield."

"So the cutting intention did not include me?"

"You, or any one."

"Thank you! adieu," and away flew Clairville. Lady Ashleigh soon called him back.

"I shall be very much in your way, I am sure; for two ladies walking arm-in-arm, and *tête-à-tête*, are invariably telling their secrets."

"Our conversation was no secret; we were talking of Anne Montresor."

“ And her love for Compton, I would swear.”

“ Then for once you would swear truth.”

“ I saw Compton last January.”

“ Saw him—saw Compton !”

“ Yes, why are you surprised ?”

“ I did not know any body ever saw him now, he lives quite retired, they say : how came you to fall in with him ?”

“ I paid him a visit.”

“ Then I would lay my life that Mrs. Compton is a very pretty woman.”

“ You would lose your stake,” answered Sir Francis, coolly ; “ she is not pretty at all. The history of my visit is this. You may have heard, perhaps, of my shooting match with Danvers for the last day of the season. Shortly before it took place I found myself very much behindhand, both as to training and practice ; in this dilemma I be-

thought me that Compton's living in Norfolk must be situated in the very best sporting country in the world, so I proposed myself as his guest for a few days, making the ostensible reason of my visit, love of the man, not of his manors, which, by the bye, he is a most unworthy possessor of. He really treated me very well; his claret was tolerable; he produced two very decent *entrées* each day; I have tasted worse *fondûs*, and he almost was successful in an *omelette aux confitures*."

"Heavens! to hear you talk," observed Lady Ashleigh, "it would be imagined Harry Compton cooked the dinner himself to do honour to his guest."

"No, no; I do not mean to insinuate any such thing: if he had done so, he would have looked less bored, and if his wife had done so, I should have had a better opinion of her intellect."

“ Did Compton look bored, and his wife a fool ?” enquired Lady Ashleigh.

“ Most indubitably the one and the other.”

“ I am very sorry.”

“ Sorry !” answered Clairville ; “ as Lady Anne’s friend, you should rather be glad.”

“ Anne does not wish Compton unhappy.”

“ Then Anne is a very generous woman, for he made her very much so. But to continue the account of my visit. My apartment was not uncomfortable ; the feather-bed was not placed above, but below the mattress ; the looking-glass took in a fair portion of my form ; I was allowed the luxury of an arm-chair, and the grate was not over rumfordized, and not filled with ashes but with coals, which Compton allowed me to consume without the least apparent dismay.”

“ So much for the corporeal part of your entertainment,” said Lady Ashleigh ; “ now for the intellectual.”

“ Certainly : Mrs. Compton said little ; Harry, as you may remember, was no great talker, and had less opportunity than even he could wish to deliver his sentiments by the extreme loquacity of——”

“ Of whom, I beseech you ?” interrupted Lady Ashleigh : “ you were not, then, a family party ?”

“ Far be it from me to say otherwise,” continued Sir Francis ; “ the conversational part of the entertainment was entirely furnished by the family. Miss Anne (I liked the sentiment of the name) was aged five years, and Master Henry aged four. They actually sat at breakfast with us, at dinner with us ; and their lisping accents were so much the fashion of the house, that Mrs. Compton never spoke in any other but the infan-

tine tongue, and even Compton himself I caught tripping occasionally. I have named only two, but the Comptons had another precious pledge of their love ; a description of animal I was previously unacquainted with—a baby ! but, thanks to Mrs. Compton's maternal character, we became very intimate ; and I now know that the most disagreeable thing in nature, not even excepting Master Henry and Miss Anne, though they did steal my perfume and peep into my trunks—is a baby !”

Lady Ashleigh laughed. “ Your account is charming, but I must hear something of Mrs. Compton's looks.”

“ Intolerable.”

“ What, so very ugly ?”

“ How can a woman be otherwise whose hair is combed by her infants' fingers ; whose lap is their constant seat ; whose shoes are slip-shod, stockings in wrinkles, and who sat at the

head of her table with *a baby* on her knee !”

Geraldine could not forbear smiling ; Lady Ashleigh laughed outright. “ Poor, poor Harry Compton—that such should be the end of one who might have married Anne Montresor ! After all, he may be happy.”

“ From such happiness defend me !” exclaimed Sir Francis.

“ I do not mean that his lot would suit you.”

“ Or any that ever lived in the society of which you may remember Compton was a very cherished member. The way he called to his mind the most trivial circumstances of those days convinced me how little congenial his present life and situation are to his tastes and feelings.”

“ But why,” enquired Geraldine, “ should his situation be different ?”

“ The marrying out of one’s own

caste, particularly so gentle a being as Compton, annihilates a man."

"Who then was his wife?"

"Miss Leonora Hobart, seventh daughter of Lord Hobart, sister to Lady Thunderford and the Honourable Mrs. Brushwood."

"But this connexion does not sound so ill."

"Then it is only sound, like an idiot's talk, and signifies nothing. For Lord Hobart is nothing, or nobody; Lady Thunderford is nobody; Mrs. Brushwood, or Broomstick, I forget her name, is nobody, and Compton is become nobody by connecting himself with such a set of nonentities. You will perhaps say he is none the less happy; but I will tell you my own opinion, and," addressing himself to Lady Ashleigh, "you know Lady Anne and I ceased to be friends, when she took up the splenetic line, so I do not speak out

of affection to her. Compton does regret her: his wife has no mind, and his own energies require rousing: they have no society; his children, by their noise, worry his nerves; his wife, by her dullness, wearies his spirit; but the most convincing proof I have of his regrets is in some lines, I believe by Cowper, which I found written in the beginning of a Virgil, which lay on his study table: a book, I remember of old, he was always devouring. The lines were translated into Latin, and attempted in various other tongues: the original, I dare say, is familiar to you, Lady Ashleigh, whom I know to have a poetical mind.

‘ But not to know a treasure’s worth
Till time has stolen away the slighted good,
Is cause of half the poverty we feel,
And makes the world the wilderness it is.’ ”

CHAPTER XII.

FOR a long time after Geraldine quitted Ashleigh Park, her thoughts dwelt on the two she had left there—Lady Ashleigh and Lady Anne Montresor; but though she thought of them both with interest—an interest distinct from affection—yet the degree was different, as regarded the two ladies. Deeply affected as Geraldine had been with Lady Anne's story, on nearer acquaintance the effect had worn off. Lady Anne's history rested solely on love; but her character had no accordance with her history. It was true, Lady Ashleigh said she was changed; but it was almost a change that knowledge of

the world, rather than particular disappointment, might have produced; and how far it extended, Geraldine could not be aware. Whatever might be her inward feelings, Lady Anne could bear a grave but undisturbed air in society: she could converse on all topics with animation and talent; she could ride her horse with an air, which showed pride in her own address, and pleasure in the exercise; she could work as if ornamenting a piece of canvass was useful or interesting; and reading seemed a never-failing source of enjoyment. Then, thought he faults of the world would incur her censure, yet their misfortunes had ever a passage to her heart; and to the indigent, as Geraldine learned from Lady Ashleigh, her marriage with General Montresor was a blessing indeed. And though there was no reason to believe that now, at the lapse of seven years, her love for

Compton was extinct, yet her mind was evidently superior to her affections, and every hour strengthened the more noble but less interesting points of her character. Lady Anne was, therefore, rapidly degenerating into a wise, cold, uninteresting, good, useful woman, as different from her sister-in-law, as light from darkness ; and it was this difference made the interest in Lady Ashleigh ; but, alas ! only interest, unmingled with the respect or admiration her more exalted relative excited.

Lady Ashleigh, in the conflict between ambition and love, yielded to the first, without relinquishing the last. She married to please her father, and to please herself by becoming a Countess and the possessor of a large income ; but her love still existed, though in obscurity, and returned with renewed force, when the insipidity of the companion, to whom she was chained for

life, became every moment more evident, and with it the consciousness that wealth and rank cannot constitute happiness. As auxiliaries, they may be useful, and swell the sum of human bliss; but not as principals, unconnected and alone. The death of Elliot threw her entirely upon the world, as her chief object and end; for a short moment, her spirits, however subdued by the loss of her lover, wavered between worldly and domestic joys:—the experiment neither did nor could succeed—Lord Ashleigh did not want her attentions, or understand her intentions. He could not comprehend why they were to ride together, or walk together; why she did not go out every evening, and to every thing; why her diamonds were not in constant employ; why her carriage-horses ever were to rest; or why, if at her post at the head of her dinner-table at seven o'clock, it mattered in

the least where she had spent the rest of the day. It would have been well for Lady Ashleigh, could she have turned to herself when disappointed in her husband and saddened by the loss of her lover ; but such was not her character. Her reading was desultory, and rarely carried her mind along with it, unless addressed to the feelings in the morbid language of fictitious sentiment. Music she regarded only as a talent for society ; of drawing and work she knew nothing ; her restlessness made her fond of exercise ; but she knew not the bliss which is added to motion, when “sermons are found in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in every thing.” The most fragrant flower, the fairest scene, the brightest sky without the voice of man, became to Lady Ashleigh a sickening desert ; with it, the rudest spot on earth was a Paradise.

To such a one a Cicisbeo was indis-

pensable ; and the want was easily supplied ; and as stupidly as harmlessly, till Sir Francis Clairville filled the office. He gave it a new grace : Lady Ashleigh was surprised, and pleasure succeeded to surprise. Clairville had the art to make her believe he felt what he could not feel, *love*. Lady Ashleigh laughed openly at his passion ; he inwardly at her credulity ; but the smiles on neither side were destined to endure. Sir Francis Clairville's end was gained — Lady Ashleigh's affections were his — but, like the monster in Frankenstein, he shrank from his own creation ; he trembled at the passion he had given life to. But this is all anticipation : when Geraldine left Ashleigh Park, its fair mistress had yet to learn that,

——“ Man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to woman.”

CHAPTER XIII.

WITHOUT dwelling on unimportant events, dull in themselves, and duller to relate, I will step forward in my story five months, and will place Geraldine in an arm-chair by the drawing-room fire-side of Mr. Douglas in Cavendish Square: in a corresponding chair on the opposite side sat Sir John Vavasour. Geraldine looked thoughtful, her eyes rested on the flames; her companion's eyes were more brilliant, and as they turned to Geraldine, he seemed to require from her to throw aside her abstracted air, and be equally pleased with himself. Not wholly to disappoint his

expectations, Geraldine smiled languidly, and withdrawing her contemplations from the mountain of smoking coal she had been observing, she did as she was required ; that is, offered her congratulation on the event announced — Sir John Vavasour's marriage with Miss Stuart. Happiness made Sir John talkative ; and though Geraldine's words were few, and all regarding the object uppermost in his mind, he yet could hardly await their conclusion, ere she was again to hear of all the raptures, delight, and bliss, present and to come, a man may be supposed to utter, who at length finds himself on the eve of possessing that good which he had for years sighed for, and sighed in vain. Geraldine heard him with complacency, and when a very long visit was concluded, began to give way to reflections on what she had heard.

The history of Sir John's marriage was briefly this. Mr. Halliday, to gratify his sole passion, play, had married the wealthy widow of a Portuguese wine-merchant. Georgiana Stuart, released from her engagement, at the earnest request of her brother, was no longer deaf to the solicitations of Vavasour ; she accepted his offered hand, though she scrupled not to avow that her brother's advice actuated her conduct : her lover was too passionate to be heroic, and trusted to time to produce that affection which Georgiana did not affect to bestow. All this tale, in much more verbose style, Geraldine had listened to with what appetite she might ; a lack of sentiment on the part of the gentleman taking much from the interest in her eyes. The interest lay in a packet of letters in illustration of his discourse, and which on his departure Sir John Vavasour left for Geral-

dine's perusal. Most eagerly did she regard the well-known characters. The letters were chiefly from Colonel Stuart addressed to his sister. The story of Mr. Halliday's marriage was given, evidently with a sigh for the sordid spirit which actuated it, though such cupidity might prove advantageous in the end to others; and the advice to his sister to marry Vavasour, was worded in the most tender, yet at the same time the most determined manner. The letter concluded with these words: "Had I any home but a camp, I would not be so urgent with you to marry; but, situated as I am, should we lose dear Lady Lawnley, your residence with Lady Mary would afford as little protection as society. She could bestow neither the one nor the other; and in sharing her home, you would encounter all that is distressing, and necessarily unsocial, without a ray of sunshine to cheer your existence."

Deeply did Geraldine think over this passage ; but another claimed almost as much attention, without so clear an idea of why it was so interesting.

“ Dr. G’s. opinion of Lady Mary’s health,” wrote Stuart, “ surprised me ; I knew that she had been unwell, and that Lady Lawnley had been alarmed at one time ; but I imagined that all cause for uneasiness had long subsided. I should be very glad to hear from Dr. G. himself, and have therefore written to ask his true opinion ; for I am well aware that those symptoms which denote decline, are precisely of a nature to elude the even vigilant observation of a constant companion, such as Lady Lawnley, but are unveiled to one less interested, and less watchful, but more conversant with bodily ailments.”

This paragraph was read and re-read by Geraldine till a faint blush suffused her cheeks at the thoughts it had given

rise to, and quite eclipsed in interest the details of Halliday's regrets and excuses, Vavasour's hopes and fears, Georgiana's tears, and Colonel Stuart's evident desire to soften all faults, and promote the happiness of all, as far as his influence extended.

She was interrupted in her reflections by the entrance of a servant with a letter, which bore every outward mark of coming from abroad; Geraldine read the superscription, it was from Lord Cliftown.

Lord Cliftown's genius was not particularly distinguished in authorship; his style of writing will not add immortality to his name, as in the case of his great prototype, Admiral Lord Collingwood, who seems to have united the statesman, scholar, and hero, in a manner that might make landsmen, with all their superior advantages, blush for their deficiencies, and learn elegance and di-

plomacy from one "nursed to the note of a gun."

But to return to Lord Cliftown: his letter was dull, and Geraldine thought it was cold also, but this might be accident. As it was, it served to light the candle, which was necessary in order to the sealing up the packet of letters, which Geraldine having read, was to restore to Sir John Vavasour.

About three weeks from this period, Miss Stuart's marriage took place. Geraldine was flattered, though surprised, at being selected as one of the bridesmaids. Her brother and his wife having been some time in Ireland, and herself living with the indulgent Mr. and Mrs. Douglas, she had no scruple in accepting the office, and no remarks to endure afterwards, not thinking it necessary to mention the circumstance in writing to Ireland. That others would

be less silent, she felt assured ; and it seemed a link of communication betwixt her and Stuart, that in the account she was well aware he would receive of his sister's wedding, her name must certainly appear.

Lady Mary Stuart was not at the marriage. Lady Lawnley mentioned her delicate health as the cause of her absence.

Deprived of her niece's company, Lady Lawnley seemed more than ever desirous to cultivate Geraldine, who, in obedience to Georgiana's parting request, spent a few days without calling upon her aunt. It was very evident that Lady Lawnley was not in spirits : it might be the loss of Lady Vavasour's society ; it might be increasing years and infirmity ; it might be the illness of her daughter : however, the presence of Geraldine evidently was agreeable to

her; though, could she have penetrated her companion's feelings, she would have spared her the too frequent repetition of the gradually increasing symptoms of danger Lady Mary's case hourly proclaimed, and to which Geraldine listened with the outward air of indifference, but inward agitation.

Lady Mary Stuart's case was at length pronounced hopeless. Sir John and Lady Vavasour were summoned to London, and Geraldine devoted all her leisure hours to softening the sorrow of Lady Lawnley, which was extreme.

"My emotion," she observed one day to Geraldine, "may appear absurd, my grief wrong; for, poor thing! to Mary the security of a far happier existence cannot be doubted:—of her much will not be required, as much has not been bestowed, and the pure in heart, we are told, shall see God. But still the affection I bear my poor Mary no one can under-

stand; deficient as she may seem to others, to me she is as attractive as though she were the most talented child—and with this difference, that talents, with cleverness, often lead their possessor astray, and produce the sacrifice of piety, domestic love, and general charity, to the shrine of vanity, self-love, and fashion. Such a heart-breaking trial I have escaped; and in my child, though little pleasure has been afforded me, I have escaped much pain. The very tranquillity of her life has been satisfactory to witness; and I have often turned to her unthinking guileless mind by way of repose, when the faded form of Georgiana crossed my mind, with her altered broken spirit, and all for one whose most merciful act was in placing an insuperable barrier between them. This fortunate circumstance will, I hope, have opened a happier state of existence to Georgiana: it has left me little to care

for here below ; and, when I have laid my poor child in the grave, I may anticipate with pleasure the speedily treading the same path. When I have once more seen Stuart, gazed on his noble mien, and heard his animated accents, all I wish for will be accomplished. My next desire will be the tomb."

"My dear Lady Lawnley," answered Geraldine, "when once you see Colonel Stuart, all your interest in life will revive ; and in your poor daughter's husband will be renewed all your love for her."

"Impossible !" and Lady Lawnley shook her head mournfully.

"Impossible !" exclaimed Geraldine, "impossible to love Colonel Stuart !"

"Oh no, I did not mean that ; I love him tenderly, fondly, but"—and a faint blush rose on Lady Lawnley's pallid cheek—"I cannot expect him to share

my sorrows—to lament *my* loss. He married in obedience to his uncle—I was not blinded then, I am not deceived now—I know what human nature is. Stuart will feel for *me*, will understand *my* tears, and attempt all that man can do to assuage *my* grief—this I know, and I should be a barbarian not to love him for his kindness—but—one blow cannot be avoided—Stuart cannot soften the misery I shall feel at his marriage.”

The colour flew to Geraldine’s cheek, but she had not the power to articulate a word. Lady Lawnley continued.

“Some lively, lovely, thoughtless girl will soon fill my Mary’s place; she will be brought to me by her adoring husband, all smiles, freshness, and youth, for me to cherish and consider as my child. I am too old to feign attachments, too old to begin to love. She will consider me cold, selfish, and dis-

trustful ; her husband will partake her feelings ; their children will revel in my Mary's wealth, and look upon me as an intruder or interloper—wonder from whence I sprang—what I have to do with their family, or even on the earth ! They will not be far wrong—then, indeed, I shall have little business with this life, and the sooner I abandon it to those more fitted to enjoy, the better. It is, therefore, my wish that, when my poor Mary's breath is fled, her husband and myself shall meet but once again.”

A long pause ensued. Lady Lawnley did not weep, but the tears chased each other down Geraldine's cheeks.

“ Poor thing ! ” said Lady Lawnley at length ; “ I have made you weep. Alas ! forgive me. I have betrayed the selfish feelings of a narrow-minded old woman : you should pity me, my love, and not weep.” Lady Lawnley drew

the trembling Geraldine towards her, and imprinted a kiss on her cheek. Age had in no way impaired the original acuteness of her mind; and that her words had touched some secret chord, which had awakened Geraldine's sensibilities, she was assured. A suspicion of the truth flashed across her mind—But then her engagement to Lord Cliftown!

Geraldine was at length at home and alone. “Yes,” she exclaimed, “Lady Lawnley is right; some fair, gay girl, will soon fill Lady Mary's place: Lady Lawnley, Lady Mary, Geraldine will be forgotten. In the presence of his new idol, all Stuart's past pains, pleasures, anxieties, and promises, will be thrown to oblivion.

In a few days, Lady Mary Stuart was no more. The newspapers an-

nounced the event. A splendid funeral procession accompanied her remains to the family vault, in Warwickshire: Lady Lawnley retired with Sir John and Lady Vavasour, to their seat in Sussex; her house in St. James's Square was sold: and Geraldine resolved to tear from her heart all interest in the family—to forget their existence—to think only of Lord Cliftown.

Strange as she knew it must appear, she wrote not to Lady Lawnley, or Georgiana; she made no inquiries concerning them. Stuart, as the husband of Lady Mary, she could think of; but, free and unshackled, she drove him from her thoughts, and tried to do so from her heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE conclusion of this tale must be brief ; a few more pages, and the scene closes, not on Geraldine Hamilton as the wife of Lord Cliftown, nor as the dependant of her brother's bounty ; but as the bride of Colonel Stuart, and the cherished daughter of Lady Lawnley. This desirable end was the generous work of Lord Cliftown : his own words shall speak for themselves. It is not necessary to swell this work with the letters on the same topic addressed to Captain Hamilton and Geraldine ; one to Colonel Stuart is sufficient, and explains all that is requisite to be known as to how the fate of Geraldine Hamilton was decided.

“ MY DEAR STUART,

“ Circumstances, as you may well remember, once placed me in the confidence of your love for Geraldine Hamilton, which love seemed, by untoward events, to be so entirely a hopeless attachment, that when, at a later period, I sought to obtain the affections of her you admired, I did not consider myself as acting in any way dishonourably towards yourself, or unfairly by Geraldine; and I trust you are of the same opinion. My proposals were not only sanctioned, but supported by her brother, and accepted by herself; but I am bound to say she never professed love: still, we were on the eve of marriage, when it pleased the first Lord to present me with H. M. S. Active, from which I now write, and which same Active I joined too expeditiously to have time for me to make Geraldine Lady Cliftown, and (I tremble when I write) I fear a very unhappy woman; but not so wretched as I myself, the

cause of so much misery, should have been. I should not have endured it; I should have thrown myself from the mast-head, and left you and her free to profit by the removal of that barrier, which, thinking insuperable in the person of Lady Mary Stuart, gave me the idea of uniting myself to the only woman in the world I ever fairly loved. The death of your wife has caused me to write you this letter; but it is not alone her death which has induced me to reflect that the love I bear is a selfish passion, unreturned, unwished for, and a cause of much misery to one who, spite of the blindness which obscures a lover's vision, I know looks coldly upon me. I am well aware that she and you met the morning you sailed from Portsmouth—I heard her sobs—I saw her agitation. Whether your interview was owing to design or accident, I know not: I have been a wild fellow in my day, and should not expect more from others than they have

received from me. As my wife, I might have objected to Geraldine's behaviour ; but as only my affianced and unwilling bride, I felt unable. I would not, however, see her again ; and ever since, have been trying to think less of her. Upon one thing, however, I resolved, and that was, never to marry her without a decided approval from her own mouth. In the mean time, fearing her brother's anger, on whom she is entirely dependant, I kept the thoughts of my mind to myself till we again met, when I determined not to be satisfied without an explanation on her part. The event which has freed you, has hurried on my fate. I have written to Geraldine, to release her from her engagement ; and I have written to Arthur also. What he may think of my determination, I neither know nor care. He will be sorry, perhaps, to lose me for his brother-in-law, because he likes my profession ; and he may anticipate, perhaps, that Geraldine Hamilton may continue as

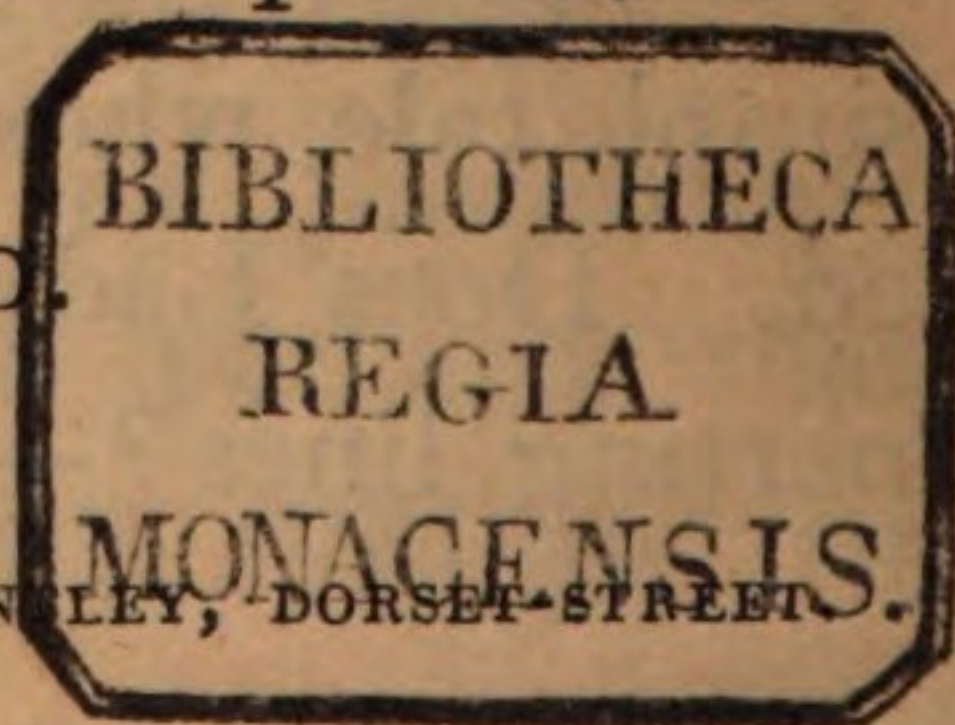
such in the capacity of a maiden-sister or aunt all her life. That it is your business to prevent such an end, I need not point out to you, I hope; but if I am mistaken, and you judge otherwise, I will share my fortune with Geraldine though I never see her again. She shall be independent; her noble spirit shall not for ever be tied down by poverty; and in her hands my gold will be a blessing, not a curse, as it often proves: it will bring forward one whose beauty and virtues have too long languished in obscurity. Adieu! dear Stuart; let me, when the war is over, find you seated beneath your spreading oaks, with Geraldine by your side, who, I suspect, will then be far more inclined to welcome me with a smile, as your friend, than at any former period of our acquaintance. Yours, &c. CLIFTOWN."

Are there any other persons in this simple tale, whose fate needs to be recorded. Does Lady Ashleigh require a few parting lines?—of her would the reader

inquire further? Is it in the grave she has found rest? A merciful Providence provided otherwise; and whilst Lord Ashleigh neglected and then divorced her, and her lover, to avoid the payment of damages vindictively enormous, was faithless to his country and mistress, Lady Ashleigh found refuge in the bosom of her friend Lady Emily Horton. By her the tears of the penitent were received, the suffering criminal sheltered; and whilst Lord Ashleigh found another wife to weary, and Sir Francis Clairville another mistress to wrong, the blessings of the poor fell on the head of Lady Ashleigh, who, with her partner in good, and far from her partner in evil, sought and obtained in retirement and comparative poverty, that peace which is from above, and which, to the truly penitent, is granted by One who is just, omnipotent, and merciful.

THE END.

LONDON: PRINTED BY SAMUEL BENNETT, DORSET-STREET.







The new British Novelist comprising works by the most popular and fashionable writers of the present day

Bd.: 44. Self-Guidance. Vol. 2

London [ca. 1835]

P.o.angl. 251 d-44

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10747969-5